



## Metro



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### To Gift Or Not To Gift

Office Gift-Giving Can Be Difficult

By Penelope Graham

The holidays are a time of sharing and giving, but that generous spirit can be more harmful than beneficial if used inappropriately at the office. With so many co-workers to choose from, and a big boss to impress, who should gifts be bought for, and what shouldn't be given?

**Lynne O'Connor, principal of Advanced Career Coaching Inc.** and a certified career management fellow, said that many offices have a specific way of dealing with the holiday season.

**"I think if you are new to the organization, you should ask people who have been there longer than you, particularly folks who are senior, what the acceptable practices are," O'Connor said. "Some organizations are changing, and are moving towards charities."** She suggests that rallying co-workers to donate can be a positive career move.

**"Use leadership to spearhead the toy drive or food drive, or find a way to build on what the company is already doing," she said.** Secret Santas, where names are often drawn from a hat, and givers are revealed at the end, can take the pressure and guess work out of it. **"There is no owing to who gave what, and it isn't a personal gift, and there is often a cap on it," O'Connor said. "One office I knew said 'you can only spend \$5, and you can only shop at The Dollar Store,' and they had fun with it."**

If the office doesn't have gift-giving strategies already in place, moderation is the safest bet for both co-workers and supervisors. **"You need to treat people equally and not play favourites," O'Connor said.** She suggests small gifts, such as home-baked cookies or a large box of chocolates for everyone. **"The gesture means more than anything else," she said.**

Suggesting an office outing, such as a holiday lunch, can bring holiday spirit into the office while taking the heat off of those who don't feel obligated to give gifts. When it comes to shopping for the boss, it can be tricky to know when you are crossing the line. O'Connor maintains that small, thoughtful gifts are best.

**"I think a gift certificate in a modest amount. I'd be a little (wary) of alcohol. Chocolate is always good, there are few people who don't like it, and it can always be passed on."** She adds that giving doesn't have to be public. **"You can put a gift certificate in a card and just pass it along," she said. "It won't be a big package with a bow, and it won't have people talking about it."**