By Dawn Stanyon, Professional Image Consultant

Living your personal brand means that you represent yourself – with personality and character – no matter where you are or what you're doing. People know what to expect from you because you are consistent, confident and clear. Here are five tips to keep your brand on course even during the bumpy ride of the holiday season.

1. Keep your look consistent for the workplace party. If you generally dress in a classic style, choose something classy and traditional for your party look (note the dress and accessories on the left of the image as opposed to the glam-girl look on the right). For men, if you're in the C-suite and always wear a suit, a nod to the holiday with a red tie is sufficient: no need to wear the holiday-lights necktie that your kids gave you seven years ago. In a nutshell: err on the side of elegance.
2. Gift exchanges often happen and office parties (we just had a lively Yankee Swap at Emily Post). Keep the gifts thoughtful, delicious or simple (think stationery, chocolates or a gift certificate to the coffee shop next door). This is not the place to give Grinch boxer shorts or exploding-snakes-in-a-can. Of course, if the whole idea – endorsed by the company - is a free-for-all White Elephant or Yankee Swap – join the fun.
3. Even if you love the receptionist's gingerbread cookies and the CFO's Swedish meatballs, don't load up your plate. When there is a buffet, yes, you're supposed to eat and enjoy but don't make it look like it might be your last meal. And if you especially love those cookies, go back for a second and let your co-worker know how much you enjoy them.
4. Be social. Not all of us are comfortable mixing and mingling, but do make an effort to chat with two or three colleagues who you don't normally associate with. The conversation can be as simple as, "What are you doing for the holidays?" or "You have a daughter, right? How old is she now?" This is a great opportunity to build relationships in a more casual setting.
5. You know we have to say it: Don't drink too much at the office party. It's probably, by far, the most damaging thing you can do to your brand. If you're seen as a confident and in control

leader – well, that's blown out of the water after a third martini. If you're seen as a thoughtful-behind-the-scenes doer, you may do or say something that may change someone's opinion of you for good. Set a limit (consider none or one). Really, it's up to you, but keep in mind: you can go out for a social beverage with friends afterward.

Have fun. Be yourself. Represent your brand. Drive safe.

Dawn Stanyon

Dawn is a Certified Image and Professional Development Consultant. A graduate of The Emily Post Institute, the London Image Institute, 360Reach Brand Analyst training and WSET Level 1 wine certification, Dawn's focus is on empowering people to reach professional success. As Director of Sales at The Emily Post Institute, she has worked with the Post family for six years. Prior to Emily Post, she was a non-profit director of development and community relations, a

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