

Should you attend after-hours functions?

At many organizations, it's common practice to celebrate co-workers' achievements with a drink after work or to band together for volunteer projects. But is it fair to penalize people who don't want to participate in these after-hours activities?

That's what one admin asked recently on the [Admin Pro Forum](#). "It was suggested during my performance review that I don't attend enough office social events like happy hours or volunteer days, and that I keep to myself too much in general. Is this a valid criticism, or is my employer overstepping the bounds of how I should be judged at work?"

Many Forum readers shared the admin's resentment at participating in these activities and thought the company was out of bounds. "No, it is not a fair comment because you do have a life outside of the office," Gloria writes. "I went through this myself. My response was 'reschedule the events during working hours. Then, I'll attend. I'm here all day. Why should I take more time away from my family, my other job, whatever it is, to spend with co-workers?'"

Others talked about the importance of finding other ways to connect socially. "My family commitments prevent me from participating in happy hour or volunteer events on weekends, so I try to participate in other ways," Carolyn writes. "I send out communications to the office on volunteer opportunities, fundraising events, etc. When it is possible, I participate because I know that building relationships with staff in other departments is good for my career."

Others expressed concern about the risks of participating in such events. "On some level, I think this is just asking for trouble because after a few cocktails people loosen up and questions are asked or comments made that might possibly cross some legal hiring lines," Charity writes.

Not participating comes with its own risks, Edward J. writes. "At some point, being absent from every activity a company offers might be taken as a judgment on co-workers, and it would be tough for that not to have a subtle effect on how a supervisor perceives your happiness with, or good will toward, the people you work with."