

From braai to party: year-end function trends

South African companies under fire are settling for braais or asking suppliers to pitch in for their year-end functions as tough economic conditions bite. While companies are still holding end-of-year functions, many have scaled down their celebrations, says Stephanie Scorgie, business leader at cievents, Flight Centre Travel Group's corporate strategic event management agency.



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Inside the office vs. outside the office

“Quite a few companies are having functions at the office such as braais or taking their teams to restaurants,” says Scorgie. “We are also seeing that in place of big year-end parties, companies are instead spending a bit more on quality venues and time with clients as part of customer relationship management programmes than on end-of-year parties.” She says companies spend on average around R300 a head on events that take place at their offices or in restaurants, or R650 a head upwards on parties held outside the office.

Supplier sponsorship

Another emerging trend is companies asking suppliers to sponsor their celebrations. “Due to budget constraints, many companies are approaching their suppliers and asking for portions of their functions and events to be sponsored. This increases the overall experience of the function as cost cutting need not happen while giving the supplier the opportunity to boost awareness of his/her company,” says Scorgie.

The "in" drink

She adds that many companies still having big year-end functions are requesting more personalised beverages that fit in with their theme or company brand identity. “Gin is the ‘in’ drink, with many local craft distilleries popping up all over South Africa and there is a big focus on having more exclusive craft labels in your bar, as opposed to internationally known brands.”

Not just a venue, an experience

Companies are also wanting to use venues to create an experience. “Rooftop restaurants have become popular, especially

in the major cities where city skylines form the backdrop for the event. South African weather makes this an ideal option during the summer months. Along with this is the trend towards natural lighting as far as possible. Many companies are also looking at venues that offer all-inclusive packages (including décor items and food), due to tighter budgets. Venues such as warehouses and old buildings are also popular again as people look for different experiences,” says Scorgie.

Social media interaction

Technology is also playing a big part in end-of-year functions. “Social media interaction has become massive. Although many companies do not want the antics of their year-end functions plastered all over the internet, incorporating social media into the event subtly has become a crowd-pleaser. This is more often than not done via a platform such as a photo booth that instantly posts to Facebook or Instagram or having a hashtag to connect posts so that the event can be relived later on if you search for it,” she says.

Live entertainment

Scorgie notes that companies are also incorporating live entertainment, live groups, dancers or different types of music. “Event attendees are becoming hard to ‘wow’ when it comes to entertainment and they expect something different. This has led to many event companies adding a twist in the form of interactive culinary experiences such as The Oyster King food theatre group, or singing waiters. Where a year-end function used to get by with a DJ, functions are now serving up more than just music. Events increasingly aim to leave attendees spellbound,” she says.

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