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Edited by Paul Charity, named second most influential sector journalist by research and insights firm Allegra Strategies



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MORNING BRIEFING FOR PUB, RESTAURANT AND FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

▲ Timing is key when it comes to Christmas party bookings

Companies like to plan ahead when organising a works Christmas party with more than half (53%) preferring to book at least three months in advance and 42% leaving it no later than a month, according to new research by guest experience management experts HGEM. A survey of more than 1,300 people found timing is key when booking office parties, with almost half of guests (49%) saying the ideal date would be two weeks before Christmas Day. When choosing a venue, half of guests (50%) rate the choice of dishes on the menu as the deciding factor, with restaurants emerging ahead of pubs, hotels and bars as a preferred venue. A spend of between £15 to £30 per head is expected by the majority of guests. During a telephone enquiry, guests expect an efficient booking process, with 68% expecting the call to take fewer than five minutes. The majority (86%) of guests expect to be asked about a deposit as standard so operators should avoid focusing on this and use the call to provide detailed and engaging information about their offer, HGEM said. HGEM can record calls to provide insight into a team's performance when taking bookings. The company said hotel brands Malmaison and Hotel du Vin improved their average call score by almost 20% last year. HGEM founding director Sally Whelan said: "You need to be confident every telephone enquiry is being handled professionally and your team has the skills to convert these enquiries into bookings."