



Unemployment at its highest in 14 years: how a holiday party can help

For the millions who have lost jobs this year the holidays may seem less joyous than usual. But what if they offered a unique opportunity to brighten the spirit as well as the prospects for finding meaningful work? If you're thinking of foregoing the festivities this year, there's good reason to get out and socialize. While having fun, you can learn a great deal about yourself and help your career in the process.

“A holiday party can hold the key to what we most enjoy doing,” says Richard Nelson Bolles, author of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*—the bestselling career book in the world, just released in a special “Job-Hunting in Hard Times” edition. “The people we are most drawn to at a party—that is, the group that we most *enjoy* being with for the longest time—can reveal plenty about our interests and talents as well as what we would most enjoy doing in a career.”

When we really love what we do for a living we not only excel at it, we enjoy the time we put into it. Considering most people spend nearly half of their waking hours at work, it makes sense for everyone to discover what they most enjoy doing. Generally speaking, all skills divide into six clusters or families. To see which ones you're most *attracted to*, try this simple exercise:

Imagine an aerial view of a room in which a party is taking place. At this party, people with the same or similar interests have (for some reason) all gathered in the same corner of the room:

People in “Group A” have athletic or mechanical ability. They prefer to work with objects, machines, tools, plants, or animals, or to be outdoors. We'll call them “Realistic.”

People in “Group B” like to work with data. They have clerical or numerical ability and enjoy carrying things out in detail or following through on other's instructions. We'll call them “Conventional.”

People in “Group C” like to work with people for organizational goals or for economic gain. They like influencing, persuading, performing, leading, or managing. We'll call them “Enterprising.”

People in “Group D” like to work with people in a social way or are skilled with words. They like to inform, enlighten, help, train, develop, or cure people. We'll call them “Social.”

People in “Group E” have artistic, innovative, or intuitional abilities. They like to work in unstructured situations, using their imagination or creativity. We'll call them “Artistic.”

People in “Group F” like to observe, learn, investigate, analyze, evaluate, or solve problems. We'll call them “Investigative.”

1. Which corner of the room are you instinctively drawn to (as the group of people you would most *enjoy* being with for the longest time)? Leave aside any questions of shyness, or whether you would have to talk with them. Write down the group letter for that corner of the room.
2. After fifteen minutes, everyone in the corner you have chosen leaves for another party across town, except you. Of the groups remaining, which corner are you most drawn to (as the people you would most *enjoy* being with for the longest time)? Write down the group letter for that corner of the room.
3. After fifteen minutes, this group leaves for another party, too, except you. Of the groups remaining, which one would you most *enjoy* being with for the longest time? Write down the group letter for that corner of the room.
4. Now, underline the skills in each corner that you like the best. Therein lies the clues to what you most enjoy doing. (“The Party Exercise” Pp 240-243, *What Color Is Your Parachute? 2009*)

For more fun exercises, see *What Color Is Your Parachute? 2009*. This classic career guide not only provides what job-seekers in this tough economy need to know, but also the reassurance that everyone can find work that has meaning and purpose (and even have fun while they're at it!).