



A STAND ON CEREMONY

You're invited to an employee's wedding. Now what?

BY NICOLE GULL

WHEN AN EMPLOYEE AT BOTANICALS gets married, a wedding gift is a no-brainer for CEO Casey Cooper. The Chicago-based special-event floral design firm springs for arrangements for the big day. "I haven't had to go to Tiffany's in a long time," says Cooper.

If only every CEO had it so easy. But for many company owners, employee weddings can be confusing, from whether to go or what to give. If you're invited, gauge whether you've been invited out of obligation. Don't attend, for example, if you have little contact with the employee. Dallas-based event planner Steve Kemble goes so far as to suggest declining all invitations to avoid any appearance of favoritism.

As for gift-giving, Lydia Ramsey, author of "Manners That Sell," says that company owners ought to send one.

"If you don't," she says, "you're saying you don't value your employees." Determine an amount you want to spend (Ramsey suggests \$100) and head for a couple's registry. Kemple says a handwritten congratulatory note is enough (except for personal assistants or if your company has fewer than 10 employees.) Scott Allison, CEO of Allison & Partners, a PR firm based in San Francisco, sends both a personal and a corporate gift, accompanied by cards with either his or the company's name to show who's bearing the cost. He doesn't give gifts only a boss can give, such as extra vacation days. "If you do it once," he says, "you have to do it all the time."

However you decide to handle staff weddings, make your policy consistent and known so employees know what to expect. ♣