The Office Christmas Party Is Not Cancelled

Many companies hold parties to celebrate the winter holidays around this time every year. But COVID-19 has made 2020 an extremely unusual year. Most businesses are avoiding any unnecessary gatherings because of the continuing spread of the new coronavirus.

In fact, a recent study finds that the percentage of companies planning parties has sharply dropped. The international jobs outplacement firm, Challenger, Gray & Christmas, carries out the research every October. Last year, 76 percent of human resources representatives questioned for the study said their companies had plans for winter seasonal parties. This year, the percentage is just 23. And, the study found that 75 percent of those companies will hold their parties online.

John Ross is president of Test Prep Insight, a small online education business in Sacramento, California. He said the company's 10 employees want to see each other face to face. But, the usual plan of a holiday dinner party made him uneasy, he said.

Ross had to get creative.

He decided to treat his employees to a day of outdoor activities at a snowy resort about 200 kilometers away. The group will share a midday meal together, as well.

Other employers are looking for ways to make virtual parties livelier and more memorable. Jonathan Como is the founder of Offsyte, an events marketplace for corporate team building. It has organized events for employees of several large American companies, like health insurance company Blue Shield, and Lyft, the ridesharing company.

The most popular celebrations involve sending food and drink to employees' homes for virtual parties, Como said. Online game sites for groups are also popular, he added.

These online group games often involve solving imaginary murder mysteries or escaping from houses filled with tricks and traps.

Marketing company Rank Fuse chose such an event for its holiday celebration, said employee Chelsea Roller. Employees of the small company based in Kansas gathered together online to solve a murder mystery organized by Red Herring Games.

Normally, Rank Fuse holds a holiday dinner in the winter. But this year nothing is normal.

"Every employee will be given a character to play," Roller said of the holiday game plan. "It will likely be very silly."

Many companies are using virtual celebrations to offer something people have missed throughout the pandemic: live shows.

HireSpace is a British event company. It is organizing 50 virtual office celebrations in December, says co-founder Edward Poland. They will include live music and other artistic performances.

On Site Opera is a New York City singers' group that performs in unusual spaces and places. It received a request this year to perform for employees of a California law firm. The singers will perform operatic pieces linked to stories of law and justice.

Some larger companies are spreading out holiday fun over several weeks. Events planned include holiday-themed clothing competitions, cooking classes, gift exchanges, and more.

I'm Susan Shand.

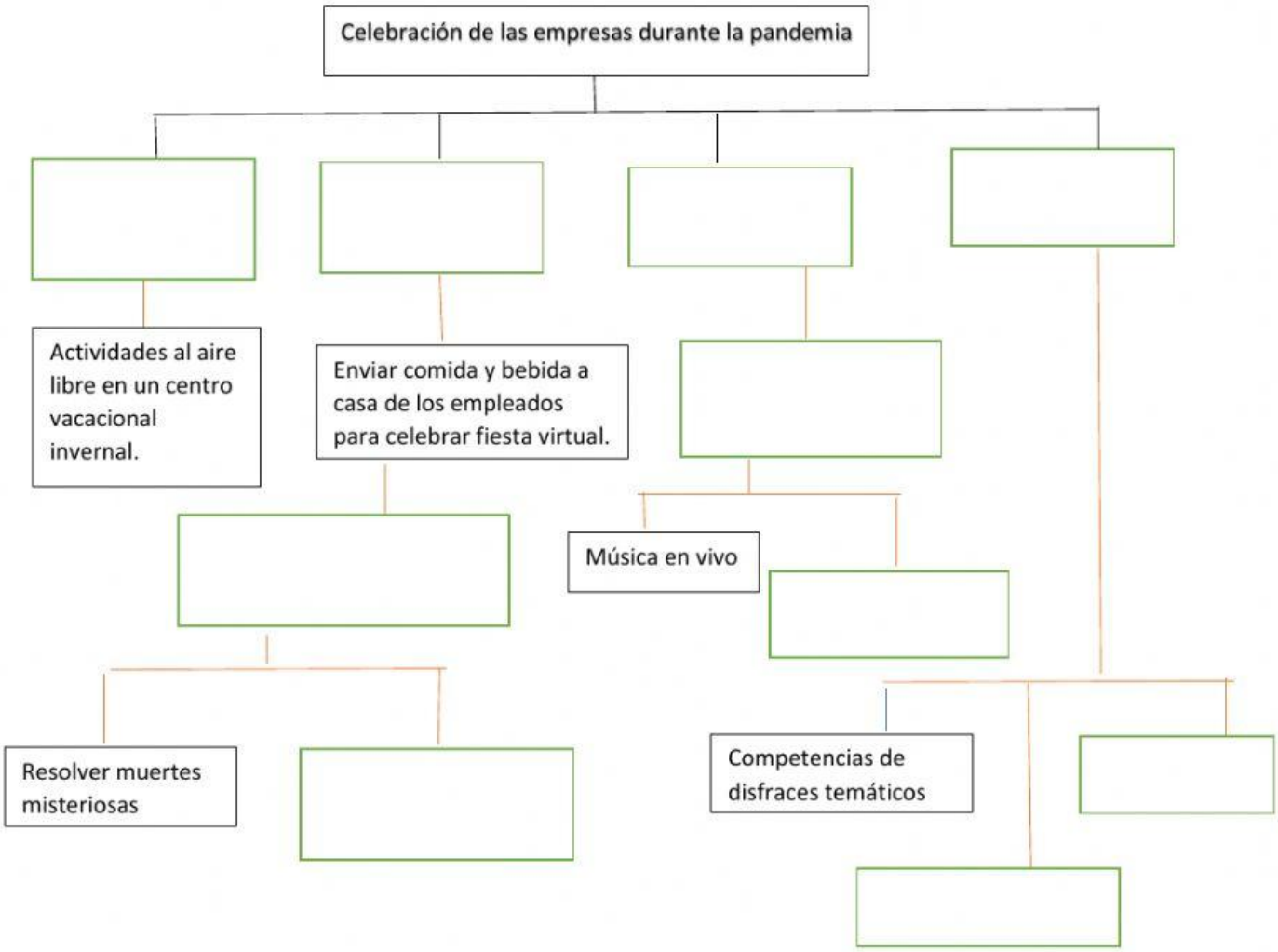
The Associated Press reported on this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Caty Weaver was the editor.

The Office Christmas Party Is Not Cancelled (voanews.com)

1. Relaciona las palabras del texto con su significado en español.

1. Gatherings	A. Reubicación
2. Dropped	B. Incómodo
3. Outplacement	C. Solicitud
4. Uneasy	D. Al aire libre
5. Treat	E. Reuniones
6. Outdoor	F. Bajó
7. Ridesharing	G. Invitar
8. Request	H. Vehículo compartido

ESQUEMAS #38

2. Completa el esquema de acuerdo al texto. Arrastra las opciones según corresponda:

TEST PREP INSIGHT	Juegos en línea para grupos	Intercambio de regalos	OFFSYTE	PEQUEÑAS COMPAÑÍAS
Espectáculos virtuales en vivo	Clases de cocina	HIRESPACE	Presentaciones artísticas	Huir de las casas llenas de trucos y trampas