



Tips on ethical gift giving

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When it comes to gift giving in the federal workplace, how much is too much?

"Twenty dollars or less," Bill Bransford told FederalNewsRadio, "and no more than fifty dollars a year to the same person pretty much keeps you in safe territory, but," said the partner at Shaw, Bransford and Roth, "of course there are exceptions and there are times when you are actually allowed to give more."

If you had that personal friendship before that boss became your boss and you had a history of maybe treating your boss to a round of golf or a lunch or going out to dinner or buying a round of drinks, keep in mind all of those are defined as gifts under the gift rules, then that can continue. The clearest example is if somebody's a relative, a member of your family and they're also a federal employee and maybe even at the same agency you work at, you can certainly give that gift as a member of the family, but you'd better have a pretty good explanation for why this is different and not be making something up or creating a false situation. Remember there have been several people over the last few years who have received gifts who have gone to jail.

Bottom line, said Bransford, gifts to each other, to the boss, boss to subordinates, "that kind of thing is just not a good idea. It's not a good idea at all. The safest thing is to not give any presents."

Plus there's the weirdness factor. There may be people in the office who are going through rougher financial times and just can't afford to give gifts to everyone in the office. It makes things uncomfortable and can create "a negative dynamic in the workplace and should be avoided."

If you feel you absolutely must give a gift [to another employee](#), or [if you receive one](#) from outside the agency, and have a questions about exactly what is and is not allowed, consult your Designated Agency Ethics Official.



Bill Bransford is a partner at Shaw, Bransford and Roth and co-host of [Fed Talk](#) which airs Friday on Federal News Radio. This week's topic is [Do Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Tips on Gift Giving from the Office of Government Ethics](#).

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