

Drinking at work a social tool

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(Medical Xpress)—Alcohol can be used for social advantage at work by both young employees and their organisation, new research from Victoria University of Wellington has found.

Master's graduate Benjamin Walker and Dr Todd Bridgman, a senior lecturer from Victoria Business School's School of Management, examined the influences on young people's [drinking](#) habits in a white collar environment. Their study involved in-depth interviews with young [employees](#) at a professional services organisation in Wellington.

Mr Walker says he was surprised to discover the extent to which [alcohol](#) featured in the workplace.

"Alcohol is commonly used to facilitate team bonding and for presenting a friendly, informal image when networking with clients. It's the way the organisation celebrates success, as well as the way new employees are inducted into the organisation.

"Laying on free alcohol has advantages for an organisation—by being seen as a 'good mate' for buying the drinks, the organisation builds up credit, with workers saying they felt compelled to 'work harder' during ordinary work time."

Mr Walker says many of the young people he interviewed felt that alcohol had helped them with their career progression.

"Alcohol has such a central place in our society that people can feel

excluded if they aren't part of it. Nevertheless, excessive drinking is discouraged, so employees consciously moderate their intake."

While most respondents said they deliberately exerted a degree of self-control over their alcohol intake at Friday night drinks to preserve their reputation, significant celebratory functions, such as mid-year or Christmas functions or team-level celebrations, were more likely to lead to heavy drinking.

Dr Bridgman says the study allowed researchers to gather valuable information about work-alcohol dynamics and start a conversation about the issues in an area that hasn't received a lot of attention.

"The next step would be to canvass a wider variety of organisations to test whether our findings can be generalised across the professional services sector and to add further information to our picture of how [young people](#) are drinking."

Provided by Victoria University

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