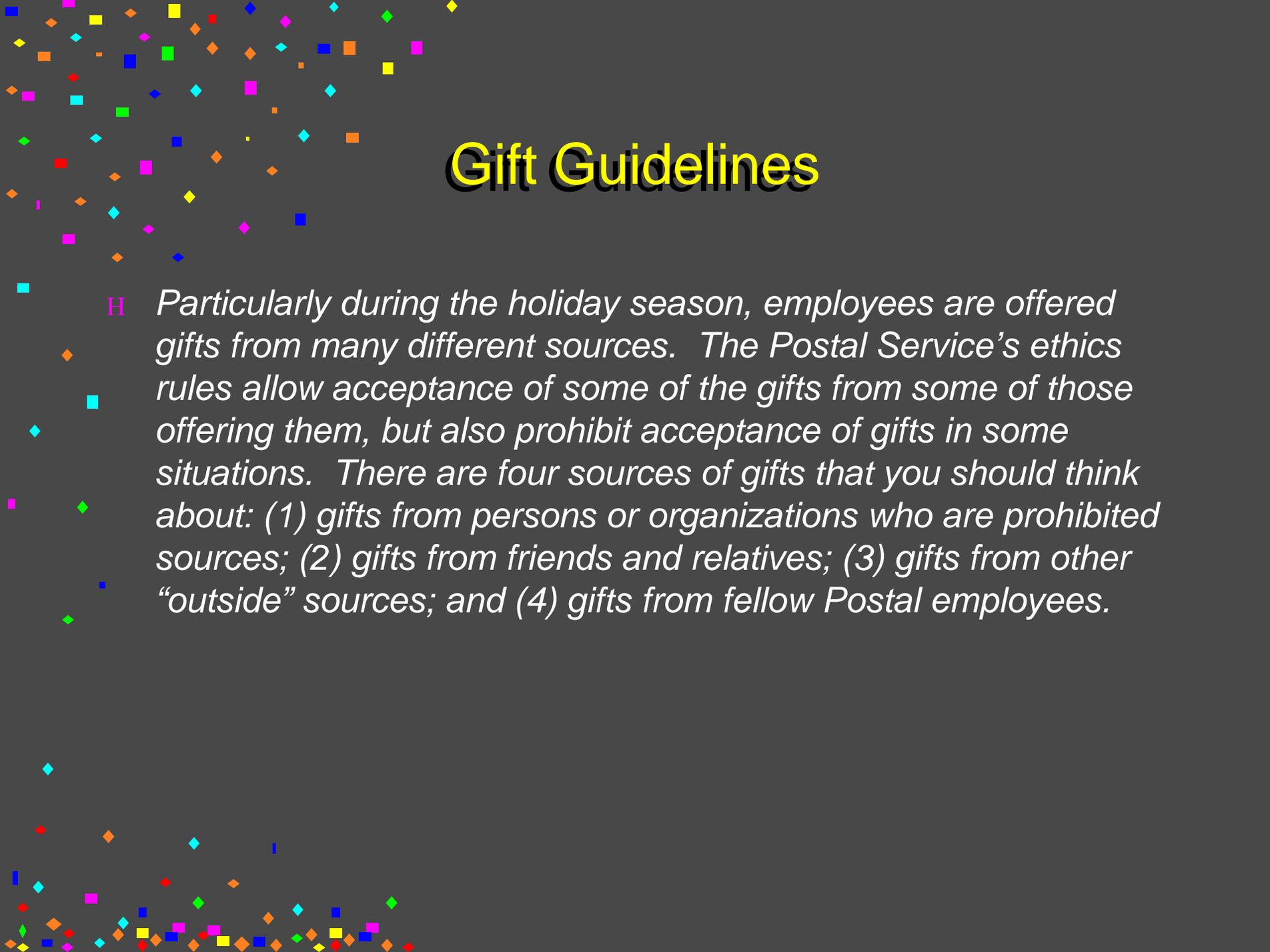


# HOLIDAY ETHICS

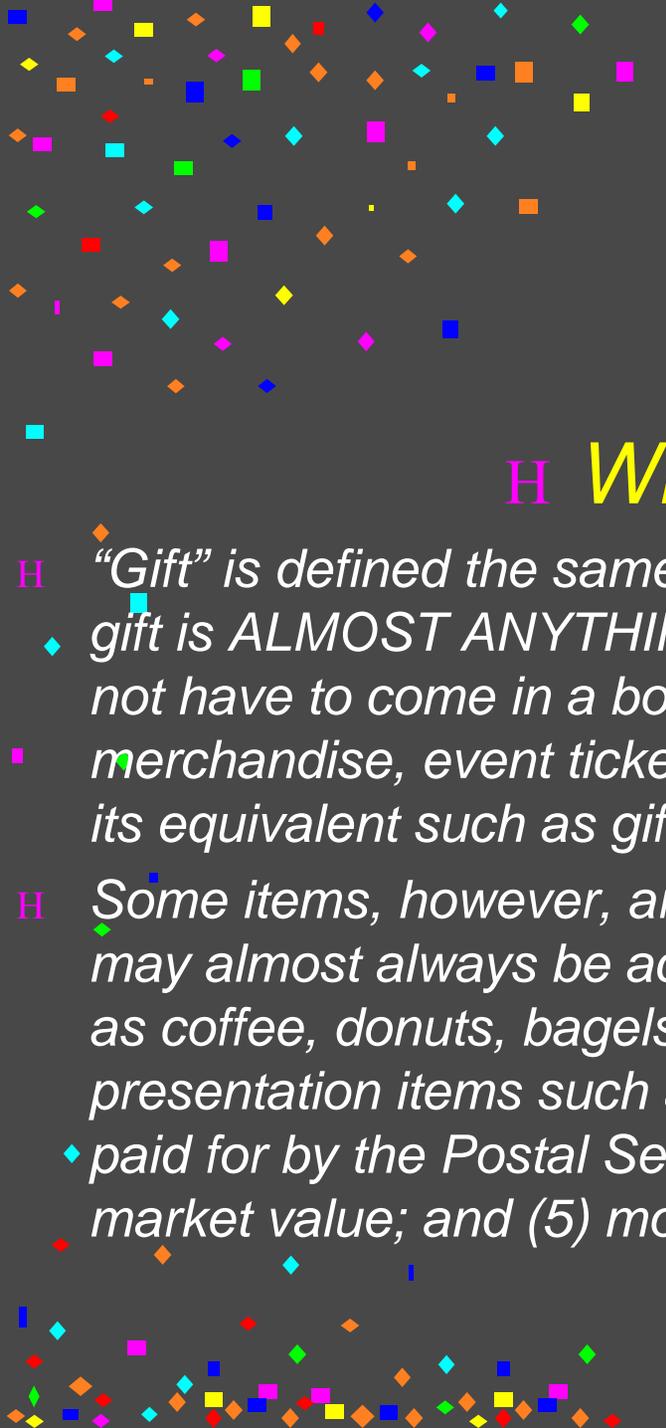


USPS Law Department  
Civil Practice Section



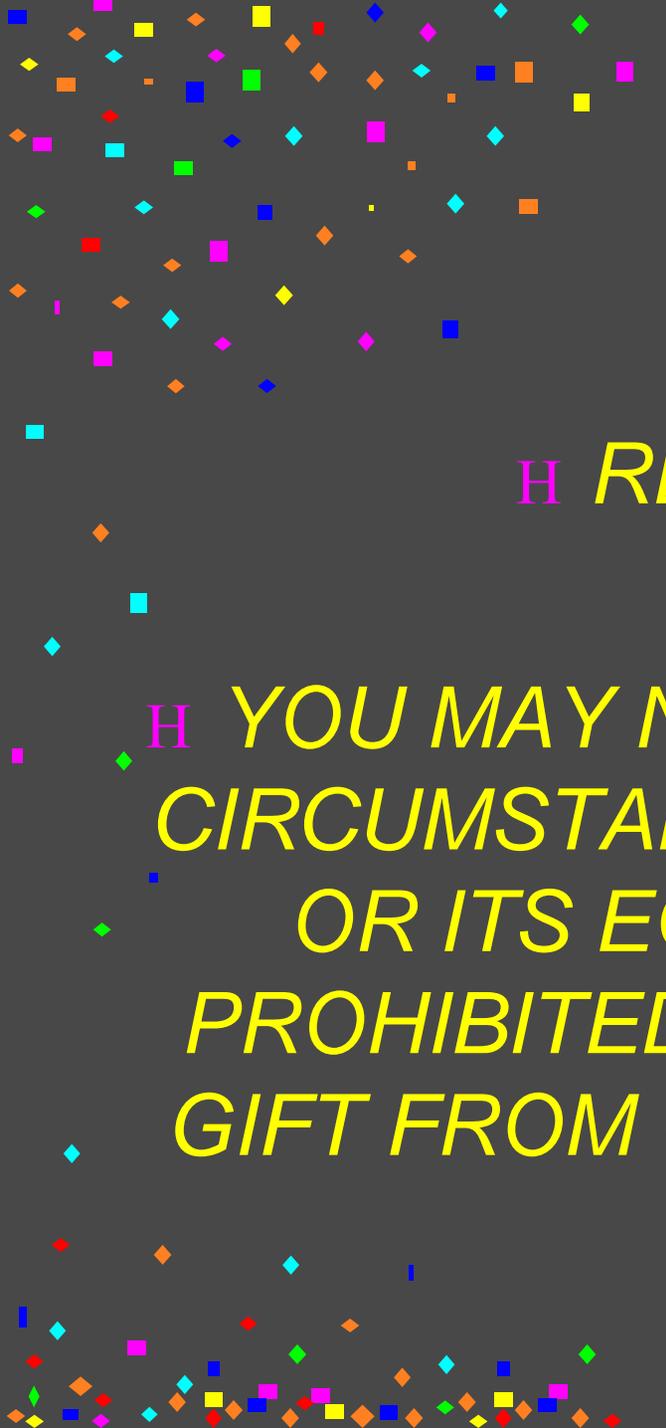
# Gift Guidelines

*H Particularly during the holiday season, employees are offered gifts from many different sources. The Postal Service's ethics rules allow acceptance of some of the gifts from some of those offering them, but also prohibit acceptance of gifts in some situations. There are four sources of gifts that you should think about: (1) gifts from persons or organizations who are prohibited sources; (2) gifts from friends and relatives; (3) gifts from other "outside" sources; and (4) gifts from fellow Postal employees.*



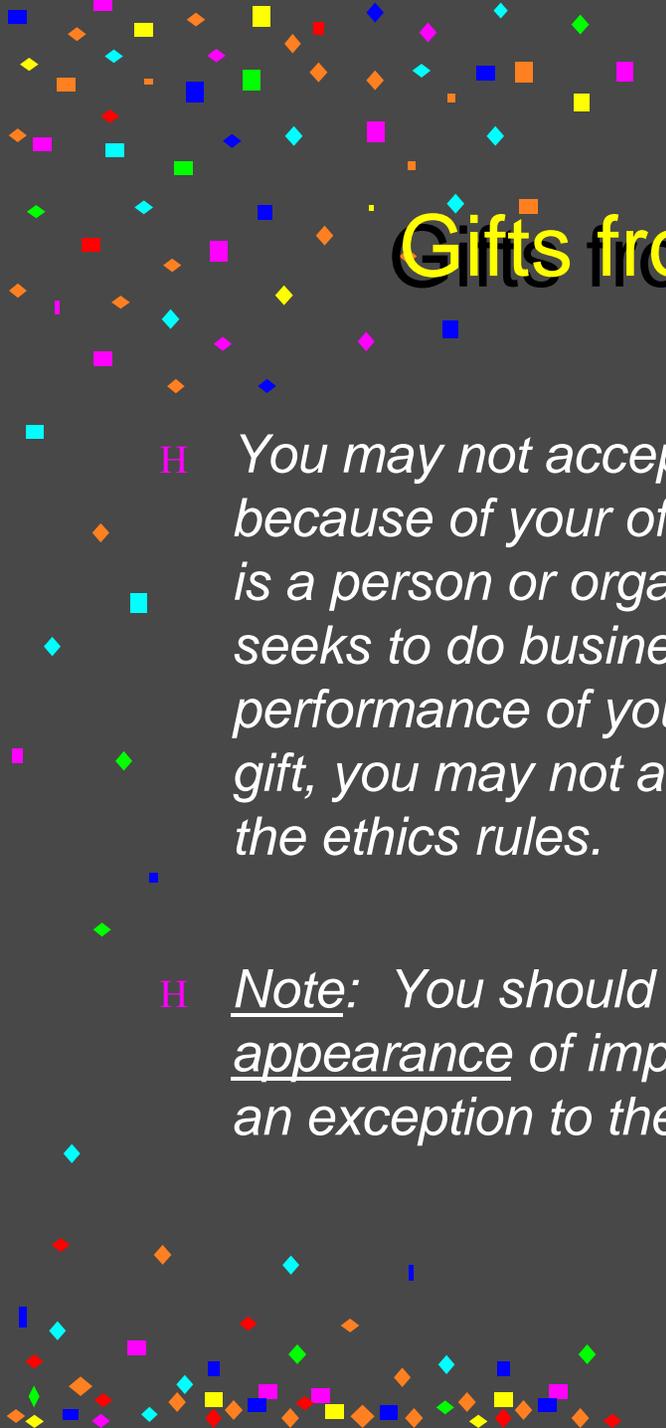
## H *What is a gift?*

- H *“Gift” is defined the same way, no matter who gives it to you. A gift is ALMOST ANYTHING OF MONETARY VALUE. It does not have to come in a box with a ribbon! Meals, parties, merchandise, event tickets, transportation, lodging, and cash (or its equivalent such as gift certificates) are all gifts.*
- H *Some items, however, are considered “non-gifts” and therefore may almost always be accepted: (1) modest refreshments such as coffee, donuts, bagels or soda (unless part of a meal); (2) presentation items such as pens, plaques, or mugs; (3) items paid for by the Postal Service; (4) items for which you paid market value; and (5) most prizes in public contests.*



*H REMEMBER!*

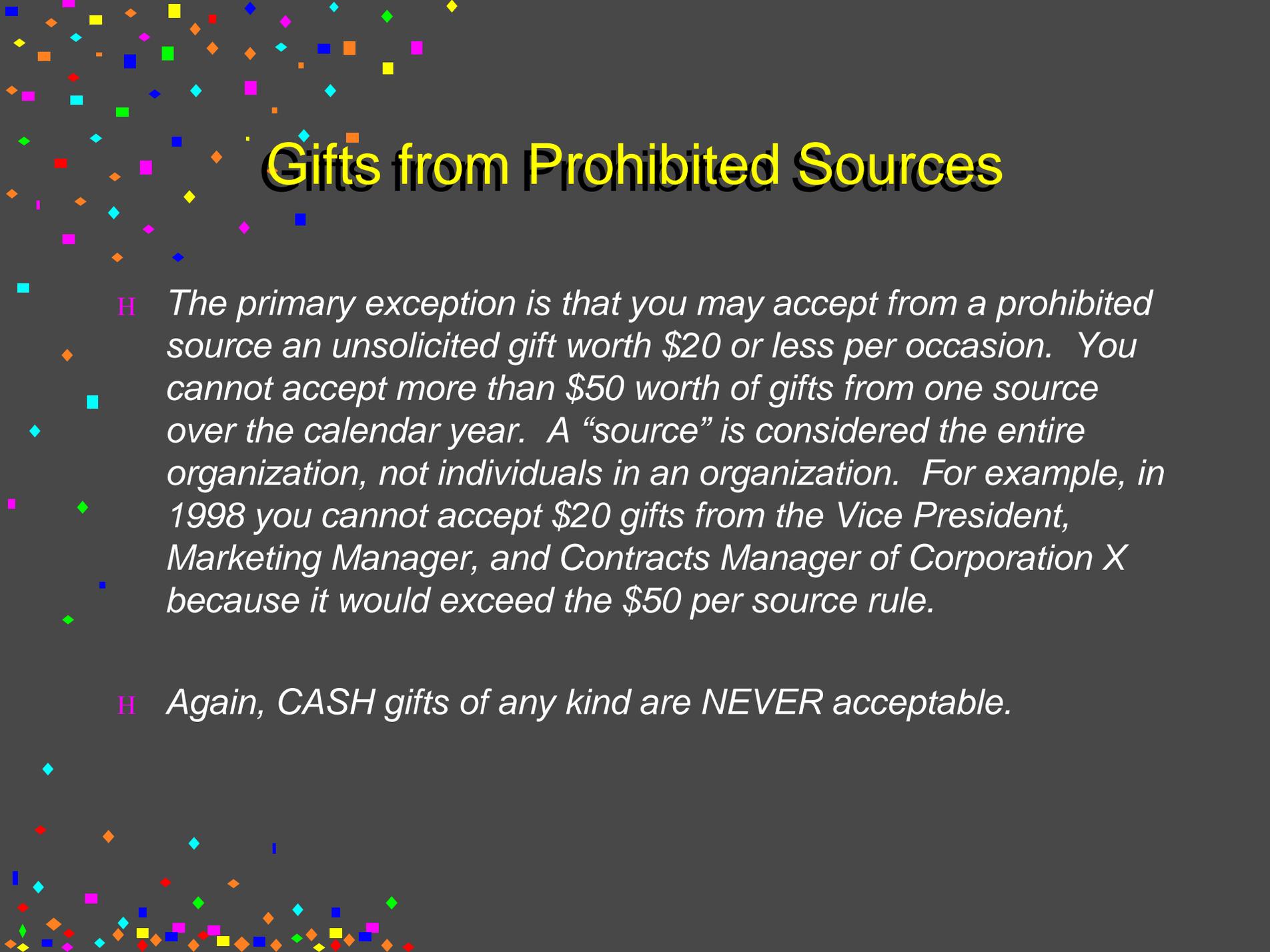
*H YOU MAY NEVER, UNDER ANY  
CIRCUMSTANCES, ACCEPT CASH  
OR ITS EQUIVALENT FROM  
PROHIBITED SOURCES OR AS A  
GIFT FROM OTHER EMPLOYEES.*



# Gifts from Prohibited Sources

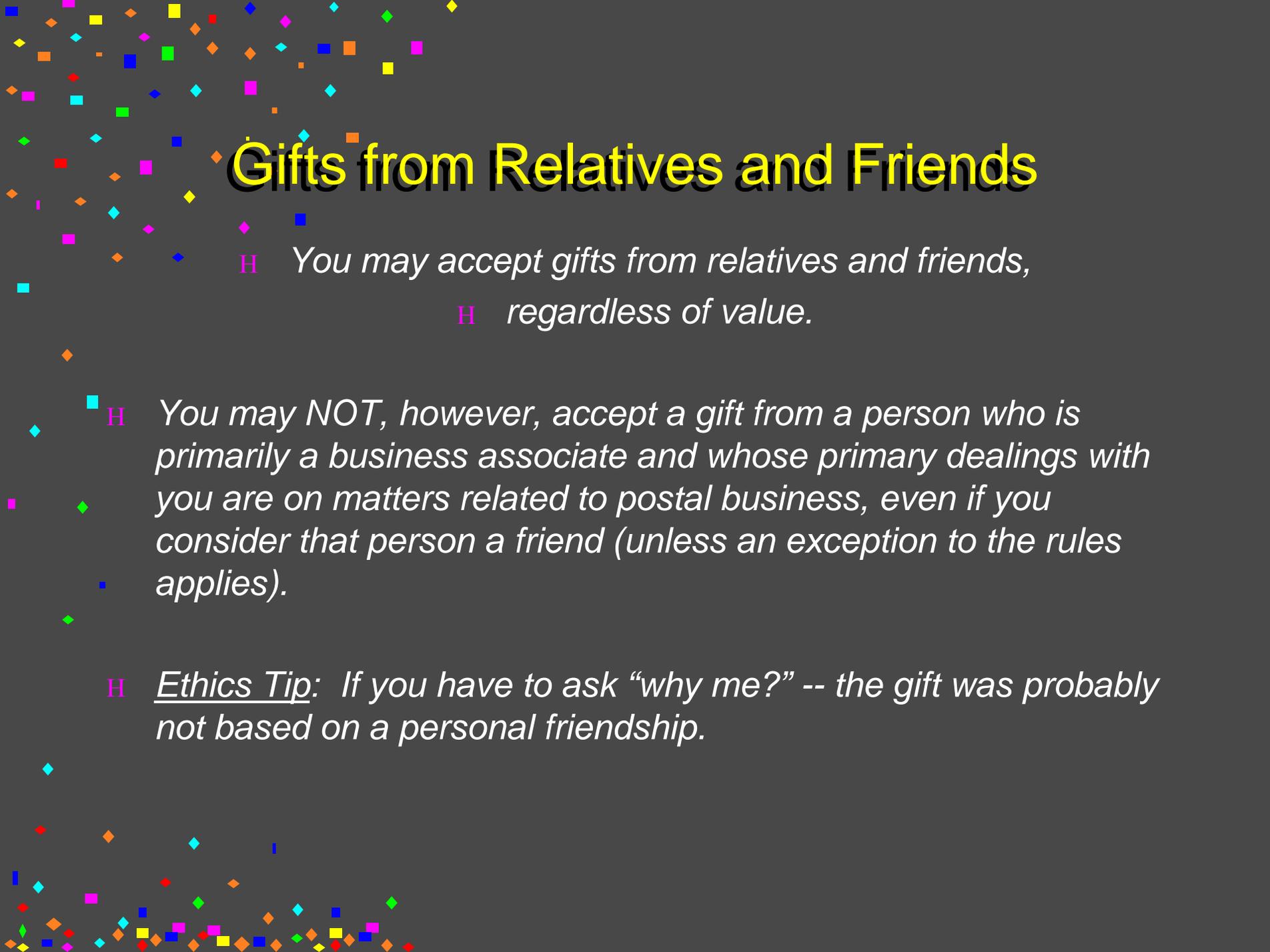
H *You may not accept gifts from a prohibited source or gifts given because of your official position. Generally, a prohibited source is a person or organization who has business with your office, seeks to do business with your office, or is affected by performance of your duties. If a prohibited source offers you a gift, you may not accept it unless it falls under an exception in the ethics rules.*

H *Note: You should avoid accepting gifts that might cause an appearance of impropriety, even if it is otherwise permitted as an exception to the gift rules.*



# Gifts from Prohibited Sources

- H The primary exception is that you may accept from a prohibited source an unsolicited gift worth \$20 or less per occasion. You cannot accept more than \$50 worth of gifts from one source over the calendar year. A “source” is considered the entire organization, not individuals in an organization. For example, in 1998 you cannot accept \$20 gifts from the Vice President, Marketing Manager, and Contracts Manager of Corporation X because it would exceed the \$50 per source rule.*
- H Again, CASH gifts of any kind are NEVER acceptable.*

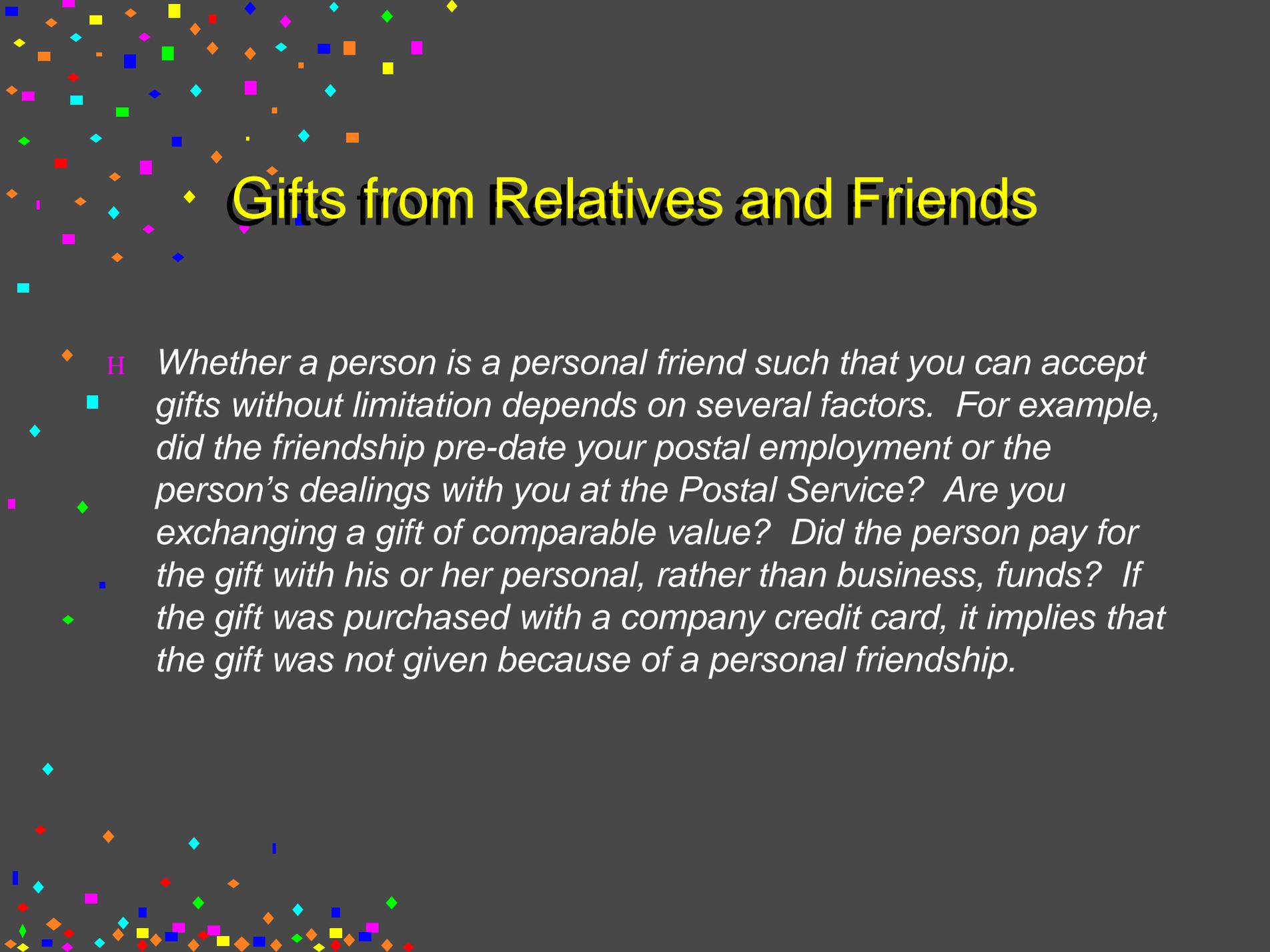


# Gifts from Relatives and Friends

H *You may accept gifts from relatives and friends,  
H regardless of value.*

H *You may NOT, however, accept a gift from a person who is primarily a business associate and whose primary dealings with you are on matters related to postal business, even if you consider that person a friend (unless an exception to the rules applies).*

H *Ethics Tip: If you have to ask “why me?” -- the gift was probably not based on a personal friendship.*



# Gifts from Relatives and Friends

- ◆ *H Whether a person is a personal friend such that you can accept gifts without limitation depends on several factors. For example, did the friendship pre-date your postal employment or the person's dealings with you at the Postal Service? Are you exchanging a gift of comparable value? Did the person pay for the gift with his or her personal, rather than business, funds? If the gift was purchased with a company credit card, it implies that the gift was not given because of a personal friendship.*

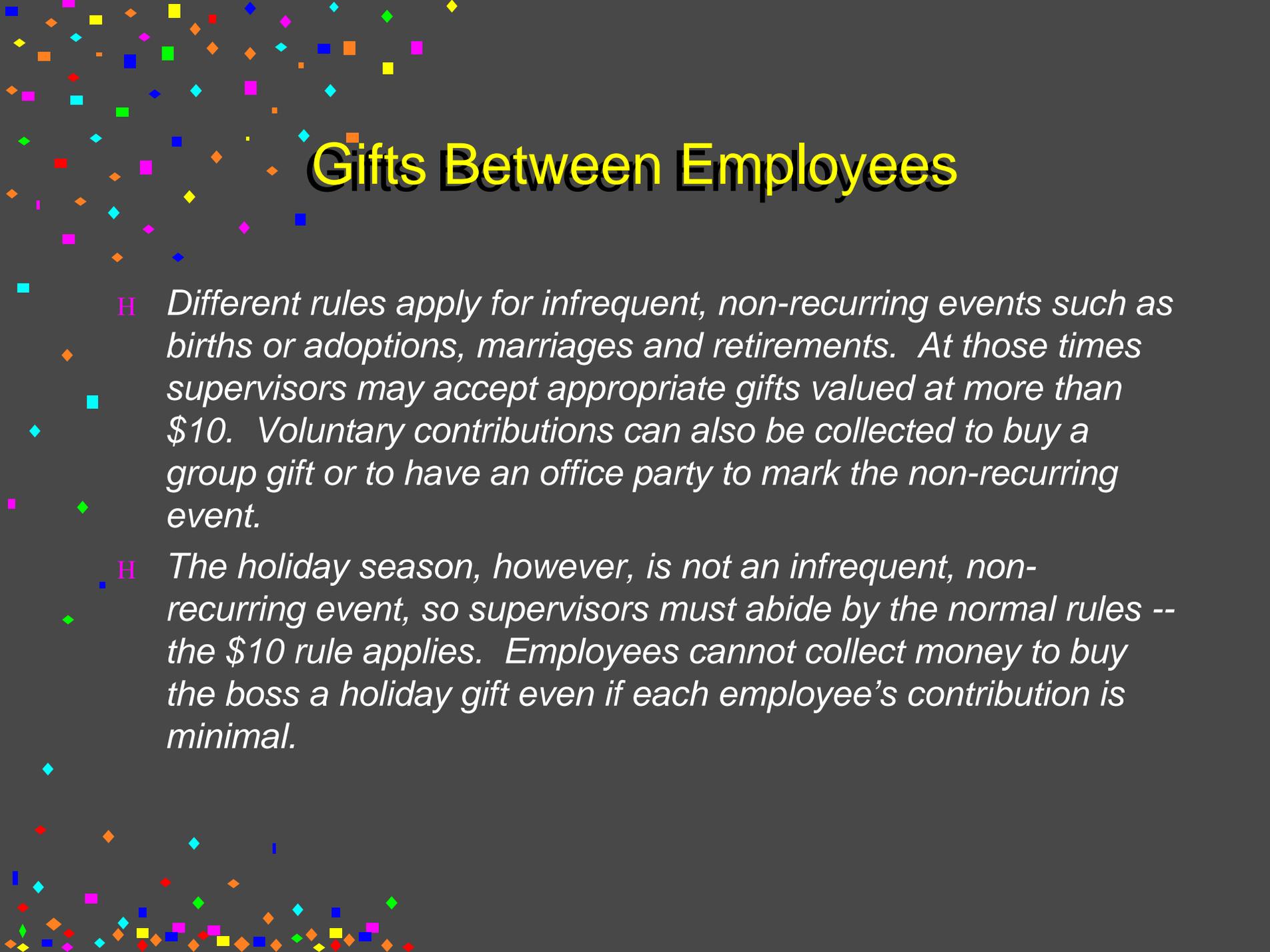
# GIFTS BASED ON OUTSIDE BUSINESS OR EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

- H You may accept certain gifts resulting from your own or your spouse's outside business or employment activities, as long as it is clear that the gift has not been offered or enhanced because of your postal position. A gift is "enhanced" if you or your spouse are treated differently than others in the company. For example, if your spouse's company sends all managers (but not spouses) to the Bahamas, yet offers to pay for you to accompany your spouse, you are being treated differently. This would mean that you cannot accept the gift of the trip if it is offered because of your Postal Service position.*

# Gifts Between Employees

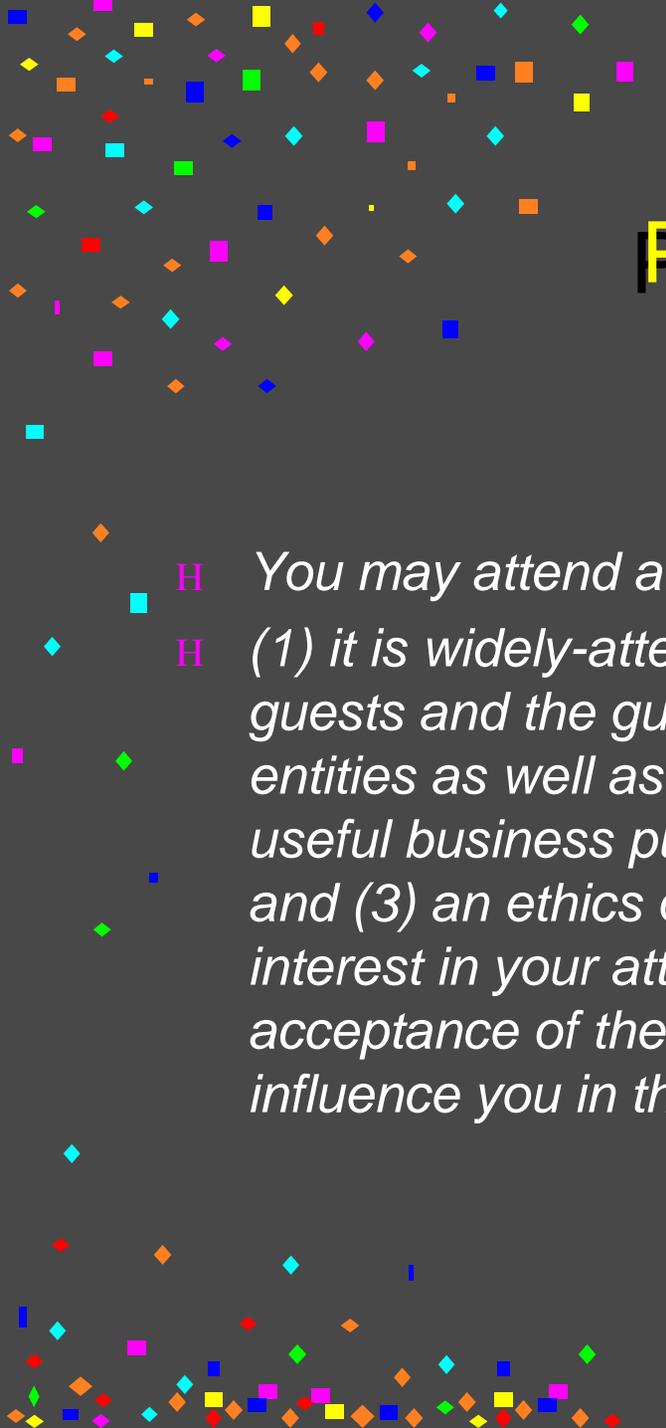
*H Generally, you may NOT accept gifts from a subordinate or from someone who is paid less than you (unless you and the donor are personal friends, and are not in a superior-subordinate relationship).*

*H There are exceptions to this prohibition, however. First, you may exchange gifts with your supervisors when the gifts have a market value of \$10 or less, and are not cash. Additionally, you and your co-workers may share food and refreshments in the office, provided that all contributions are purely voluntary. Finally, if you are invited to a supervisor's home, you may take a typical hospitality gift (such as flowers, beverages or food items) without worrying about the \$10 limit.*



# Gifts Between Employees

- H Different rules apply for infrequent, non-recurring events such as births or adoptions, marriages and retirements. At those times supervisors may accept appropriate gifts valued at more than \$10. Voluntary contributions can also be collected to buy a group gift or to have an office party to mark the non-recurring event.*
- H The holiday season, however, is not an infrequent, non-recurring event, so supervisors must abide by the normal rules -- the \$10 rule applies. Employees cannot collect money to buy the boss a holiday gift even if each employee's contribution is minimal.*



# Party Particulars

*H You may attend a party, reception or similar holiday event if:*

*H (1) it is widely-attended, meaning there are a large number of guests and the guests are from a number of private sector entities as well as the Government or Postal Service; (2) a useful business purpose would be served by your attendance; and (3) an ethics official determines that the Postal Service's interest in your attendance outweighs any concern that acceptance of the gift of free attendance could appear to influence you in the performance of your duties.*

# Party Particulars

H ♦ *Following is a quick reference for party-going postal employees:*

H *Office Parties: Employees and supervisors may share food and refreshments in the office. All contributions must be voluntary.*

H *Parties at Home: The usual hospitality extended to guests at the personal residence of either a co-worker or supervisor is permissible. Supervisors can also accept a customary hostess gift from employees when the supervisor is hosting an event.*

H *Spouse's Office Party: It is almost always okay to attend your spouse's office party. Unfortunately, the Standards of Ethical Conduct cannot save you from this annual torture.*

# Fundraising

- H During the holidays, you may be asked to give or participate in various fundraising projects. You certainly may contribute or participate, but be aware that there are restrictions on your activities. Generally, an employee may not participate in fundraising “in an official capacity.” When participating in a personal capacity, it must be done outside the office, and an employee may not use his or her title, position, or authority to further the effort. You may not solicit funds or other support from subordinates or prohibited sources.*
- H Soliciting monetary contributions while at work is permissible only if it is part of the Combined Federal Campaign.*
- H Collection of gifts-in-kind such as food, clothing and toys, is permitted by ethics regulations. Collection of these contributions on postal premises must be officially sponsored at the facility, and is governed by the Postal Operations Manual.*