

# Are Pets the Secret to Happier Workdays?

Instead of leaving them at home, could bringing your furry companion to the office be the secret to better productivity and a more positive work environment? Here's what the research says.

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Companies are now embracing pet-friendly office setups, recognizing their impact on employee well-being
- Research shows pet-friendly work environments enhance employee satisfaction, improve mental health, and boost productivity
- Pet-friendly policies appeal to younger job seekers, particularly millennials and Gen Z applicants. Studies show companies with such policies see higher employee engagement and increased willingness to return to office settings post-pandemic
- Companies like Google and Amazon have implemented pet-friendly spaces, set behavior policies, and ensured safety measures such as air purifiers and designated pet areas to maintain a comfortable work environment for all employees
- Not everyone is comfortable around animals. Employees should ensure pets remain in designated areas, are well-behaved, and do not disrupt colleagues who may have allergies or phobias, fostering a respectful and inclusive workspace

Did you know that during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 23 million American households — around 1 in 5 — adopted a pet?<sup>1</sup> Perhaps staying at home made many people realize how much brighter and cheerier their lives are when they have a pet (or two) beside them.

But now that the pandemic is over and offices are mandating employees to return to onsite work, many people find it difficult to part with their beloved animal companion. Some are even considering (or have decided) to leave their office-based work and look for flexible work setups, such as working from home, so their furry friend will not be left alone.

As employers realize this, many have decided to meet their employees halfway — thus, the concept of pet-friendly workspaces became popular, and, in recent years, it has gained incredible traction. Companies are now recognizing that there are numerous benefits of allowing pets into the workplace, and it translates to a happier and more productive workforce.<sup>2</sup>

## Benefits of Pet-Friendly Workplaces

Pets indeed change us — many people today plan their day-to-day lives and workday routines around their dogs or cats.<sup>3</sup> According to an article in Harvard Business Review:

*"One study highlighted intense feelings of guilt and job dissatisfaction among veterinary nurses most bonded to their own pets when forced to separate. Indeed, surveys suggest that an increasing number of employees plan not only their workday routines but also their career decisions with their pets in mind."*<sup>4</sup>

Hence, it only makes sense that welcoming pets to the workplace can have tangible benefits, too — and science backs up this claim. Harvard Business Review reports:<sup>5</sup>

*"Studies in diverse settings — traditional offices but also universities, prisons, hospitals, and courthouses — demonstrate that the presence of animals increases employee commitment and career satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions."*<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, pets can enhance employee morale, improve productivity and open avenues for positive changes to a company's culture. Today, pet-friendly policies are transforming traditional office environments; here are some of the benefits of having pets in the workplace:<sup>7</sup>

- **It promotes employee satisfaction and generates feelings of well-being** — Having pets in the office significantly boosts employee satisfaction; They offer comfort and companionship. Having your pet around will boost your mood if you're having a stressful day. Employees who bring their pets to work often experience increased job satisfaction and a greater sense of loyalty to their employer.<sup>8</sup> According to a LinkedIn article:

*"Pet-friendly workspaces contribute significantly to employee well-being. The presence of pets can alleviate stress, improve mood, and create a more relaxed atmosphere. This positive environment not only enhances job satisfaction but also reduces absenteeism and turnover rates."*<sup>9</sup>

- **Improves productivity** — Having your pet by your side makes you feel secure and content. Indeed, studies<sup>10</sup> show that employees who are happy and content are more likely to be efficient and focused on their tasks.
- **Attracts and retains talent** — Being a pet-friendly workplace gives a positive impression, especially among younger job seekers like Gen Z and millennials. It's a unique perk, not many employers offer. After the pandemic, it was also a way to encourage employees to shift back to office work. According to an article in Work Design Magazine:

*"Employers implementing dog-friendly policies have reported a noticeable increase in the willingness of their workforce to return to the office, with 84% of employers at dog-friendly workplaces reporting a successful return to office in the CESAR survey."*

*This trend goes beyond the mere convenience of having pets at work; it reflects a deeper desire among employees for a workplace that feels welcoming and considerate of their lifestyle."*<sup>11</sup>

- **Promotes mental health** — Animal companions provide much-needed emotional support in high-stress work situations. Having a pet beside you can help manage stress, anxiety, and depression.

# How Companies Are Adjusting to Provide ‘Pet-Friendly’ Workspaces

Many large companies today, such as Google and Amazon, have adopted a pet-friendly work setup. Many others are following their steps and adopting changes to accommodate these furry officemates. Here are examples of how companies have adapted to this trend:<sup>12</sup>

- **Having a dedicated pet area** — Pet-friendly companies dedicate specific areas within their office premises where pets can stay safely. These spaces may include play areas, pet-friendly furniture, water stations, treat dispensers, and grooming stations.
- **Implementing pet policies and guidelines** — These guidelines address pet behavior, cleanliness, and health requirements.
- **Ensuring health and safety considerations** — Companies install pet-safe air purifiers to manage pet dander. They also provide pet-friendly cleaning supplies to keep the workspace tidy.

Initially, these changes seem trivial, but they significantly impact employee morale. Being pet-friendly transforms the office, changing it from a stressful place of work to an engaging place where you can interact with your workmates professionally and socially through your shared love for pets.

## Remember — Not Everyone Is a Dog/Cat Person

Although pet lovers will find it exciting to have their furry buddy around during work hours, remember that not everyone in the office may share this sentiment. For example, some employees may be allergic to pet dander or fear dogs. Hence, as a responsible coworker and pet parent, you must ensure that you and your pet adhere to the company’s guidelines at all times.

- Make sure your pet stays in designated pet areas at all times.
- Your pet should be well-behaved, especially around other pets.
- Clean up any mess your pet makes; bring cleaning supplies with you.
- Always keep your pet neat and well-groomed.

### Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [The Washington Post, January 7, 2022](#)

<sup>2,7,9,12</sup> [LinkedIn, August 6, 2024](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Banfield Pet Hospital, April 11, 2017](#)

<sup>4,5,6</sup> [HBR, November 13, 2023](#)

<sup>8,11</sup> [Work Design Magazine, February 29, 2024](#).

<sup>10</sup> [Oxford, October 24, 2019](#).

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