

The Benefits and Challenges of Having Pets in the Workplace

There are more animals in the workplace than ever before. A [study](#) from the Society for Human Resources Management shows a whopping 7% of workplaces now accept pets onsite. That's a huge increase from a few years ago, where that kind of practice was basically unheard of unless it was for a service animal. So, why are so many companies deciding to open their doors to our furry friends? Here we discuss the benefits and challenges of having pets in the workplace.



Just a quick cat nap before I move onto the quarterly report...

Image Source: Unsplash

Benefits of pets in the workplace

Let's talk first about how pets in the workplace can benefit you and your workforce.

1. Improved productivity:

A number of workplaces have found that they actually see improved productivity from their workforce when their employees are allowed to bring in their animals. Employees typically **take fewer sick days** because they can have their animals nearby rather than having to stay home to take care of a pet that needs attention. Employees are also more likely to stay late and come in early, since they don't have to rush home to feed or walk their animals.

2. Better morale

Many workplaces benefit from improved morale as well. Employees love their pets, and they are happier when they have peace of mind that they are safe and happy. They don't have to worry if their pet is getting enough food, destroying the house, or chewing the furniture. Having their fur baby nearby to check on it throughout the day and assuage any worry or fears they may have is definitely a positive. Having animals can provide social support too, according to [Time's](#) research.

Challenges of pets in the workplace

There are some drawbacks to having pets in the workplace as well. It won't always be sunshine and roses, as they say:

1. Allergies and infection

Pets can bring in allergens as well. The cat experts at [We're All About Cats](#) state, "Pets leave behind pet dander, which many people are allergic to. Pet dander is composed of tiny flecks of skin shed by cats, dogs, rodents, birds and other animals with fur or feathers. These microscopic flecks can cause bad reactions from those who have pet allergies."

According to the [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#), about three in 10 people have pet allergies of some kind. It might not be worth it to make a few of your employees happy only to make others suffer under the weight of allergy attacks in the workplace.

Another point to consider is ensuring that your employee's pets have been vaccinated. Disease and infection can spread quickly in spaces where there are lots of animals - and not just to other animals, but to humans too. Vaccination and deworming can prevent the spread of rabies and intestinal worms, both of which could be passed on to people.

Hygiene

Even if you bathe your pet regularly and he or she is housetrained, a work environment can be new and intimidating and cause your pet to forget their training. Pets can leave hair everywhere, chew up furniture, get into fights with other animals and urinate or defecate in places they're not supposed to. You will always have these kinds of issues to deal with in the workplace, and while many of them can be minimized with some good planning and the right equipment, it's still going to affect other employees in your office.

2. Cute and cuddly pets can be a distraction

Dogs may bark up a storm and cats may mew until their owners come, and that certainly have an impact on workplace productivity. Your workers may also want to check in on their pets regularly if you have a separate space for employees and pets. That can keep them from being their most productive too, and you'll want to consider the self-control of your employees before you agree to turn your workplace into a pet paradise.



Is it lunchtime yet, boss? Image Source: Unsplash

More points to consider regarding pets in the workplace

There are a few things you should be aware of before you start setting up pet pens in your workplace or allowing employees to bring in their pets.

- First of all, **not all pets are going to get along very well**. You can have some mild mannered pets hanging out alongside aggressive or traumatized pets. Some of the pets, like [rescue dogs](#), may be coming from backgrounds of abuse. They might have a hard time socializing or being in the same area as other pets.
- Workplaces that accept pets are often able to inadvertently **help struggling pets in their area**. That's because people are less likely to give up their pets and more likely to [adopt](#) pets if they can take them to work and care for them there.
- You'll also want to **check with the landlord** to ensure that animals are allowed on the premises. While your workplace policy may be to allow them, if you don't own the building, then the final decision is not up to you.

Conclusion

There are both benefits and challenges to allowing animals in the office, and you'll probably want to talk it over with your employees and get their take on the idea before you decide one way or the other. Be sure to look at all the pros and cons and take your time in making this important decision for your company.