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Pet-friendly offices

ALLOWING ANIMALS AT WORK IS TIPPED TO BECOME THE NORM

CAREERS

LAUREN AHWAN

More pets are coming into the office as workers worry about leaving their furry friends at home and bosses resort to unusual incentives to keep and attract staff.

Job advertisements that list a workplace as pet-friendly have doubled in the past two years, according to hiring platform Indeed, correlating with a surge in pet ownership during the pandemic.

While actual postings for pet-friendly workspaces are still low, at one-in-every-400 job ads, experts believe the number will grow as companies become increasingly desperate for workers.

“This is responding to what people want. Bringing your dog to work is going to become the norm,” says Mike Halligan, chief executive officer of pet food company Scratch, whose own research shows a third of Aussie dog owners have negotiated to work from home, and more than half would take a pay cut, to spend more time with their pooch.

“We’ve got used to our dogs being by our side all the time (during Covid lockdowns) and now we don’t feel comfortable leaving them alone.

“And it’s nice, when you’ve been staring at a spreadsheet for hours, to be able to look down and give your dog a pat.”

PET ETIQUETTE

Well-behaved and properly trained dogs make great work companions, says Halligan, who is yet to hear of



MIKE HALLIGAN



Anna Cho, business manager of online pet supply store Pet Circle, brings her havanese puppy, Bernie, into the workplace once a fortnight.

other animals accompanying their owners to the office. But despite conventional thinking, he says pets with separation anxiety should not be brought to work.

“You want dogs (in the office) that are calm and feel secure and don’t suffer a lot of separation anxiety so that they can be left behind (at the workstation) if their owner needs to go into a meeting or have a toilet break,” Halligan says.

“They also need to be adaptable to different environments. You might not know when someone new is coming in or the postie is going to drop off the mail and if the dog can’t adapt to whatever is thrown

at them then it’s not going to work.” Halligan warns against a free-for-all and says strict policies must detail the areas of an office where dogs are permitted.

A roster system is also needed to limit the number of pets in a workplace on any given day.

“If you’ve got a 10-person office with 10 dogs then it’s going to be chaos but a 10-person office with two dogs is a completely different situation,” he says.

POSITIVE ENERGY

Anna Cho, business manager of online pet supply store Pet Circle, brings her havanese puppy, Bernie, into the workplace once a fortnight, booking in via a shared office calendar to comply with company

policy that only two dogs be in the Sydney office at a time.

“I do have to make sure that I’m careful that he doesn’t disturb other people but, all in all, I think it’s been really positive,” Cho says.

“When he is in the office, he has time off leash to socialise with other dogs and team members but I make sure that I monitor his stimulation levels and that he has time-outs under my desk as required.

“He brings in great energy and I have colleagues who have said they look forward to days when he is in.”

NOT FOR EVERYONE

Indeed career coach Sally McKibbin says pet-friendly workplaces could make some workers uncomfortable.

“There’s definitely challenges

Basic rules

For dogs

1. Vaccinated
2. A potty-training graduate
3. A good boy at heart (and in action)
4. Plays nice with others
5. Pretty chilled (won’t disturb the peace)
6. No plus-ones (i.e. fleas)

For humans

1. Be aware and respectful of each dog’s feelings
2. Be aware and respectful of colleagues who aren’t as comfortable around dogs

Getting your dog ready for work

Bring your dog into the office for a sniff and explore. Stick to a short, 30-minute introduction instead of throwing them in the deep end with a full day in a new environment.

If multiple dogs are to be in the office on any given day, introduce your dog to the stranger dog on neutral ground and make sure to keep the experience low-key. Start with a few hours at a time before progressing.

Source: Scratch



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