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Who let the dogs in? A look at pet-friendly workplaces

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of the pet-friendliness trend, because despite its growth, there has been little research on the benefits and potential risks of pet-friendly workplaces.

Design/methodology/approach – A general review is provided on pet ownership figures in North America and the benefits and drawbacks of pet ownership. Pet-friendly policies and practices are described, highlighting their potentially positive impact on well-being and performance. Possible concerns with pet-friendly workplaces are examined. The paper offers recommendations for organizations that are potentially interested in becoming pet-friendly.

Findings – Many households in North America have pets that are considered genuine members of the family. As a result, workplaces are increasingly becoming “pet-friendly” by instituting policies that are sensitive to pet ownership. The scope of pet-friendly policies and practices ranges from simple to more complex measures. Adopting these measures can result in benefits that include enhanced attraction and recruitment, improved employee retention, enhanced employee health, increased employee productivity, and positive bottom-line results. But there are also concerns regarding health and safety, property damage, distractions, and religious preferences.

Practical implications – The range of pet-friendly measures could apply to any workplace that is interested in improving their efforts toward recruitment, retention, and productivity, among others.

Originality/value – This paper describes a range of efforts that workplaces can offer to enhance their employees’ work lives and is the first to provide a detailed account of the pet-friendliness trend.

Keywords Work-life balance, Workplace wellness, Workplace health, Health promotion, Workplace, Stress, Family, Animals, Wellness, Pet-friendly

Paper type General review

1. Pet-friendly workplaces – a growing trend

Many North American households have at least one pet that is often considered to be a genuine member of the family. In recent years, workplaces have instituted policies that are sensitive to pet ownership – earning the title of “pet-friendly workplaces” (PFWs) – because of pressures for greater flexibility and enhanced responsiveness to wellness and work-life balance. Bringing pets to work is but one aspect of pet-friendliness; there is a wide range of pet-friendly approaches that apply to any workplace that aims to enhance attraction and recruitment, improve employee retention, develop employee productivity, enhance employee health, and increase bottom-line results. Technology firms were among the first to allow pets at work, and the trend is now reaching wider, including healthcare organizations such as nursing homes and hospitals (Barker, 2005; Barker *et al.*, 2012). Some evidence indicates that small companies are more likely to be pet-friendly (Norling and Keeling, 2010; Wells and Perrine, 2001a), yet, larger well-known companies such as Ben & Jerry’s, Google, and Zynga, among others, highlight various aspects of pet-friendliness on their websites.

While the trend of workplace pet-friendliness remains recent, humans have used animals in work settings for practical and economic purposes for thousands of years (Wells and Perrine, 2001a). Farmers have used mules to plow fields; hunters have used dogs to detect, track, and retrieve game; merchants have used horses to transport



people and goods. In modern times, working animals can still be found in the military, law enforcement, search-and-rescue, security, pest detection, and in TV and film, among others. Moreover, some modern workplaces such as universities and hospitals have therapy dogs on site. Significant to contemporary animal ownership, however, is the rise of “companion animals” or “pets.” Indeed, North America is home to millions of cats, dogs, birds, fish, and reptiles, among other species, that people consider bona fide members of the family.

Despite the anecdotal benefits of being a PFW, few empirical studies have examined this trend (for few exceptions, see Barker, 2005; Barker *et al.*, 2012; Wells and Perrine, 2001a, b). Consequently, scholars have called for more research on PFWs (e.g. Barker, 2005), a potentially significant area of concern considering the growing recognition that healthy workplaces are linked to organizational performance (Wilkin and Connelly, 2015), and the recent upswing in PFWs (Barker, 2005). This paper presents an overview of the pet-friendliness trend. It examines pet ownership figures in North America and discusses the benefits and drawbacks of pet ownership, highlighting opportunities for organizations to address an important aspect of many people’s lives. It follows with a description of select organizational policies and programs that fall under the pet-friendliness umbrella, and presents recommendations for organizations.

2. The study of human-animal interaction (HAI)

Interactions between humans and animals have been noted as vital to human development since the dawn of mankind (Quigley *et al.*, 1983). These interactions have varied in complexity, reflecting existing technology and culture, and resulting in humans perceiving animals in various ways – as “gods, slaves, subjects of art, moral examples, a source of food and fiber, and sometimes a companion and friend” (Quigley *et al.*, 1983, p. 265). As humans evolved with animals, they learned to domesticate some of them, eventually bringing them into their homes as companions, and more recently into therapeutic milieus and workplaces.

In modern times, dogs and cats belong to the domesticated species, yet few serve practical purposes (Serpell, 1996). “Pet humanization” means that most pets are of little economic use, but are treated as family members (Serpell, 1996). Because it appears to serve no concrete purpose, pet ownership is often trivialized as a largely western and bourgeois preference, when it has ancient roots and may have been a prelude to domestication (Serpell, 2011). In the 1990s, the term “companion animal” gradually replaced the term “pet,” emphasizing that the value of a companion animal derives from the relationship itself, rather than practical or economic benefit (Wilkes, 2009). Pets fulfill social and emotional needs that are comparable, though not necessarily identical, to the needs fulfilled by human companions (Serpell, 2011). Still, the scientific community remains reluctant to study pets who are deemed “too common and too cute” for serious minds (Cusack, 1988).

3. Pets in North America

In 2012, about half of Canadian households owned a pet of some kind (Hanes, 2013), whereas 3/5 of households in the USA had at least one pet (HSUS, 2014).

3.1 Dogs

Among the pet owners surveyed by Harris Interactive in 2011, 7/10 (or 69 percent) of Americans have a dog (Poll, 2011). More recent 2014 data from the American Humane

Association (AHA) indicates that approximately 37-46 percent of households own a dog, which is a decrease from previous estimates (AHA, 2014). In Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada estimates that 32.3 percent of Canadian households own a dog (AAC, 2011). Today, the Canadian Animal Health Institute (CAHI) estimates a slight increase with 36 percent of Canadian households owning at least one dog (CAHI, 2014).

3.2 *Cats*

Harris Interactive poll data from 2011 indicates that 51 percent of Americans own a cat (Poll, 2011). The AHA estimates that in 2014, 30-39 percent of US households owned a cat, which is less than prior estimates of ownership (AHA, 2014). In Canada, 2010 figures from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada indicate that about 35 percent of Canadians owned a cat, with an average of 1.8 cats per dwelling (AAC, 2011). More recent data from CAHI indicates that 37 percent of Canadian households have at least one cat, which is an increase of 2 percent (CAHI, 2014).

3.3 *Other pets*

Other popular pets include horses, birds, fish, reptiles, and small animals such as rabbits, gerbils, and hamsters. In the USA, Harris Interactive 2011 data estimate that 11 percent of pet owners have fish, 7 percent have a bird, and 8 percent own another type of pet (Poll, 2011). According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, there has been little change in ownership trends of other pets with fish being the most popular category (8.3 million), followed by birds (2.7 million), small animals (1.2 million), and lastly reptiles (266,000; AAC, 2011).

4. **Pets as family members**

Despite the costs of pet ownership, many people still welcome pet ownership, and the North American public has been generally supportive of companion animals (Serpell, 1996). This is because these animals are increasingly seen as genuine members of the family (Cain, 1983; Cusack, 1988). Surveys indicate that most pet owners consider their pets as family members (Poll, 2011). They give them names, buy them gifts (Poll, 2011), have conversations with them (Beck and Katcher, 1996), and treat them as confidants. The daily caregiving activities of feeding, playing, exercising, and caretaking all create ties that bind.

Evidence also indicates that pets play a role in the family system whereby family members establish rules for their management, can have arguments about responsibility for their care, and their loss is often met with grief (Cain, 1983). Owners also report that pets are sensitive to the feelings of family members, appearing to be aware of illness or turmoil in the household, and manifest these tensions in their health and behavior (Cain, 1983). Where children are concerned, pet ownership can teach them how to play with and care for animals, as well as practice responsibility (Cain, 1983). Animals also contribute to skill expansion in kids including kindness, nurturance, empathy, and developing a deeper respect for life, which involves dealing positively with death and grief (Cain, 1983; Wood, 2011). Research also substantiates particular health benefits for children, including lowering the risk of allergies, asthma, and obesity.

One explanation for the depth of feelings that humans have toward their pets can be attributed to the constancy of behaviors and attitudes (Beck and Katcher, 1996; Cusack, 1988). Relations with humans can be deeply fulfilling but they remain subject to mood

and everyday pressures (Cusack, 1988). Pets are constant because they do not grow up as children do (Beck and Katcher, 1996; Cusack, 1988). More importantly, the pet is “constant” in providing unconditional and non-judgmental love and affection “without taking note of the fortunes of the day [...] It makes no demands and has no ill feelings” (Beck and Katcher, 1996, p. 29).

5. Individual and social benefits of pet ownership

One of the most influential contributions of HAI research is the exploration of its effects on human health. Research to support the health benefits of people with pets began about three decades ago (Friedmann *et al.*, 2011) and has demonstrated that pets, regardless of species and to the extent that they can act as family or friends, have significant and positive effects on health (Beck and Katcher, 1996; Haverkos *et al.*, 2011).

5.1 Physical and psychological health

Several studies substantiate the effects of HAI on physical health. Studies show that pet owners have a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, take fewer sick days, make less use of practitioner services, and engage in more exercise (Cusack, 1988; Haverkos *et al.*, 2011; Serpell, 2011). Companion animals also appear to alleviate allergies and asthma (Casciotti, 2014; Haverkos *et al.*, 2011). Even though the mechanisms by which HAI benefits accrue are not entirely clear, some argue that pets reduce anxiety and stress, increase physical exercise, enhance immunity (Haverkos *et al.*, 2011). Studies show that pet antics incite laughter, providing owners with humor and entertainment, alleviating nervousness and depression, and contributing to long-term well-being (Casciotti, 2014; Cusack, 1988).

5.2 Social support

Studies also evidence that pet ownership facilitates and enhances social support (Casciotti, 2014; Cusack, 1988; Serpell, 2011). Pets are conceptualized as providers of support in the form of validation and kindness that reduces the chronic stress of loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Friedmann *et al.*, 2011; Wilkes, 2009). Moreover, the support received from pets can encourage owners to seek more social interactions with people, further alleviating their sense of isolation (Cain, 1983). Thus, there is evidence that companion animals are a form of both “bonding” – i.e. they bond closely with their owners – as well as “bridging” social capital – i.e. they provide their owners with connections to other potential friends, and social capital is in turn linked to better health (Headey and Grabka, 2011).

5.3 Community benefits

Finally, there are civic benefits to pet ownership. Pets provide people with an impetus to venture out in nature and the community (Wood, 2011). Pets also facilitate interactions among strangers (Cusack, 1988; Hunt *et al.*, 1992; Wood, 2011), and promote social exchanges within neighborhoods and communities (Wood, 2011), which is particularly welcome given the harried and isolating character of modern life (Wood, 2011). Pets can precipitate the exchange of favors among people with a positive spillover on neighborhood goodwill and trust (Wood, 2011). Companion animals can also bring people together in the public realm through volunteering and various forms of community engagement (Wood, 2011).

6. The concerns of pet ownership

The financial cost of pet ownership can be staggering and in excess of what people expect (Serpell, 1996). The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals estimates that the cost for a large dog is at \$875 a year for food and medical expenses, among others, while estimates for a cat is \$670 a year (Sullivan, 2010). Thus, the pet products and services industry has been thriving as pet owners spend billions annually on their companion animals. Indeed, the pet humanization trend is such that pet owners are willing to spend extraordinary sums of money on their pets. For example, pet owners are increasingly seeking food with healthy and recognizable ingredients (AAC, 2011; Troy, 2007). Where veterinary services are concerned, owners are spending billions annually on specialists, cancer treatments, high-tech diagnostics, and physiotherapy, among others (Serpell, 1996; Troy, 2007). The urban pet lifestyle is also replete with services such as boarding, pet sitting, grooming, and training (Troy, 2007).

In addition to these costs, pets can incur considerable inconvenience and stress upon owners (Serpell, 1996). Owners are responsible to ensure that their animals are properly contained and take responsibility for their behavior in public (Quigley *et al.*, 1983). Pets can also cause annoyances surrounding noise, housetraining, and waste disposal (Quigley *et al.*, 1983; Serpell, 1996). Companion animals can significantly limit one's independence as pet owners often need to make arrangements for their pets in the event of travel or long work hours (Serpell, 1996). In some cases, pets may exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression, anxiety, and destructiveness, causing owners worry (Quigley *et al.*, 1983; Serpell, 1996).

Finally, the general public also assumes some of the costs of pet ownership. Costs incurred by taxpayers include road accidents causing injuries, lost output, damaged property, as well as healthcare, police work, and administrative costs (Serpell, 1996). Animal-related injuries such as bites and scratches are another indirect cost of pet ownership, increasing exposure to diseases (Haverkos *et al.*, 2011; Serpell, 1996). Canine and feline waste products are not only a source of potential infection; they also pollute the environment and are a source of repulsion to many (Serpell, 1996).

In sum, pet ownership and humanization appear to be growing trends in North America. Despite many concerns associated with pet ownership, advances in HAI research substantiate multi-leveled benefits of pet ownership, including physical, psychological, social, and community benefits. Even busy professionals gain from pet ownership, and are a group among whom pet ownership is reportedly prevalent. The many benefits outlined here have lead some researchers to call for study of the national cost saving effects of pets and gains accrued in productivity. This argument is consistent with our purpose of encouraging organizations to consider becoming pet-friendly.

7. Pet-friendly workplaces

7.1 Motivations underlying workplace pet-friendliness

There are various driving forces underlying an organization's decision to become pet-friendly. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the trend begins rather unintentionally and develops overtime. A small business owner may bring her pet to work and as a result, other employees follow suit. Alternatively, organizations may participate in "Take Your Dog to Work Day" (designated by Pet Sitters International as an annual practice to raise awareness about companion dogs and promote adoptions), and then consider expanding the practice. Other organizations might adopt a more deliberate strategy to become pet-friendly, motivated by the need to offer perks that reflect the

contemporary workforce, or driven by inability to compete with benefit packages offered by larger employers.

Pet-friendly initiatives may be parceled under the larger umbrella of worksite wellness (Barker *et al.*, 2012; Bray, 2012), which refer to employer-sponsored programs that support employees and their families to improve their quality of life, reduce health risks, enhance their personal effectiveness, and positively affect the organization's bottom-line (Berry *et al.*, 2010). Changing workforce demographics and increasing benefit costs have lead organizations to focus on the health and well-being of their workforce (Eby *et al.*, 2005).

These initiatives may also be prompted by the recognition that pets are a valued part of employees' lives. Indeed, organizations are becoming increasingly responsive to employees' family responsibilities. Given that pets are considered family and part of employees' personal lives, it is a reasonable extension to offer policies and practices pertaining to pets.

7.2 *Scope of pet-friendly workplaces*

Policies and practices can range from simple or low-commitment policies and practices (e.g. offering group pet insurance) to increasingly complex or high-commitment policies and practices (e.g. allowing people to bring their pets to work). A simple option is to partner with pet stores to offer employee discounts on food, merchandise, and services such as grooming, training, and pet-sitting. Examples include organizations such as Build-A-Bear and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, which offer discounts on pet products and services as part of a comprehensive benefit package offered to employees.

Another simple option is to offer veterinary healthcare coverage. Pet insurance provides pet owners with coverage should accidents or illnesses arise, or may be used for preventative care (e.g. annual dental care and wellness exams). Few organizations currently offer this type of incentive, but among organizations that are pet-friendly – e.g., Chipotle, Deloitte LLP, Delta Airlines, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, UPS, and Xerox – it appears to be a popular option.

Some companies such as Confirm BioSciences give employees the flexibility to attend to their pet's needs during the workday by granting flexible work arrangements to accommodate their pets. For example, flextime is helpful for parents with kids who may start earlier or end their workday later to be home with their kids before or after school. The same sentiment can apply to employees with pets who may want flexible work hours to check on their pets or walk them before dark.

Organizations can also extend bereavement leave to employees who need personal time during the death of a pet. Although pets are not considered to be family under current legislation such as the Family and Medical Leave Act or the Canada Labor Code, the same entitlement to the loss of a human loved one may be applied to those who lost a pet. For some, a pet loss has a greater impact than losing a distant relative. Based on our review, pet bereavement leave seems to be rarely offered, but it can be an option on the pet-friendly menu.

A more complex option is that employees are afforded the opportunity to bring their pet to work, which is particularly beneficial for employees who may otherwise be concerned about their pets being home for extended periods of time. This trend seems to be on the rise with a small but growing number of employers that allow pets in the workplace (Fronstin and Helman, 2013). Companies such as Amazon, Autodesk, Ben & Jerry's, Build-a-bear, Cliff Bar, Electronic Arts, Google, Ibox Outdoor Clothing,

Klutz, Lafarge Construction Materials, Nestlé Purina, P&G Pet Care, Replacement LTD, Softchoice, and Zynga, among others, regularly allow their employees to bring their pets to work. Other organizations participate annually in “Take Your Dog to Work Day.”

Some organizations offer more complex options such as onsite walking services, pet daycare, outdoor pens, and grooming services. Although these measures do not appear as common, other organizations may incorporate more simple measures to support pets in the workplace such as cat litter stations, dog water fountains such as the ones at Amazon, and “barking lots” for bathroom breaks at Zynga.

7.3 Benefits of pet-friendly workplaces

There have been many positive benefits associated with PFWs, although many of them have been largely circumstantial. These include enhanced attraction and recruitment, improved employee retention, enhanced employee health, increased employee productivity, and positive bottom-line results.

Enhanced attraction and recruitment. Allowing employees to bring their pets into the workplace shows that organizations value their employees and are concerned about their well-being, which can be beneficial in attracting employees (Barker, 2005). When given a choice between a pet-friendly organization and a traditional organization, candidates may choose the PFW so that they may bring their pets to work or be around others who do so. An anecdotal report suggests that two Silicon Valley employers were recruiting a highly sought after candidate who chose the pet-friendly employer with pet insurance over the more traditional workplace (Hoyman and Duer, 2004). A PFW may attract candidates who will accept a lower wage so they can bring their pet to work (Norling and Keeling, 2010), which may be especially attractive to small businesses that are unable to compete with compensation levels at larger businesses.

Improved employee retention. Once employees are recruited, offering pet-friendly perks can help retain highly skilled employees and reduce turnover because employees have access to services for their pets, such as pet daycare while they are at work. There may be an increased fit in values between employees and their organization when organizations clearly espouse their positive sentiments toward being pet-friendly. It may suggest to employees that organizations not only care about employee well-being, but are also concerned about employees’ family responsibilities, including responsibility for pets. As such, employees may be more satisfied and less likely to leave (Barker *et al.*, 2012).

Enhanced employee health. Employees may experience less stress when they are not worried about pets being left at home all day unsupervised, particularly for those with young or senior pets who require special care. This form of workplace support might be particularly salient for high-stress and long-hour occupations. Studies show that stress levels vary over the course of the day, with individuals who bring their pets experiencing less stress, and those who do not or do not own pets experiencing more stress (Wells and Perrine, 2001a).

Increased employee productivity. Allowing pets at work can also enhance workplace productivity because employees may take fewer sick days with the added companionship at work and may perform better without the stress of worrying about pets at home. A more relaxed work environment with pets may also be conducive for creativity, where productivity increases when employees are more imaginative. Pets can facilitate employee interaction and promote communication with management (Hunt *et al.*, 1992), enhancing team building, and productivity. Absenteeism may also

decrease because of the positive effect that pets can have on employee health and employees feel valued by their organization, which reduces the number of absences from work.

Positive bottom-line results. PFWs can also have a positive effect on the bottom-line due to improved customer relations. Allowing pets in the workplace can have a positive impact on a company's image, which can increase sales. There is evidence that employees appear friendlier when pets are present, and that pets may serve as entertainment or a source of relaxation for customers (Wells and Perrine, 2001a). Pets in the workplace may also signal to customers that organizations care about employees and their families.

7.4 Concerns of pet-friendly workplaces

There are also considerations that need to be made based on potential concerns with PFWs, including health and safety, property damage, distraction, and concerns stemming from religious beliefs.

Health and safety concerns. Pet allergies are one of the most common complaints with having pets in the workplace. Employees or customers with pet allergies may experience symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, wheezing, red itchy eyes, nasal congestion, and skin reactions. According to The Asthma Center (2015), an estimated 5-10 percent of Americans experience pet allergies, with allergies to cats being the most common. Pet allergies may be commonplace, yet those with allergies may still have a household pet, so the severity of the allergies and level of exposure to the pets need to be taken into consideration.

There are issues related to pet hair that create sanitation problems, which would be problematic for service-oriented businesses such as hotels and restaurants. Customers may see it as unsanitary if they were to find pet hair on furniture, or unprofessional if pet hair was on employee uniforms. There may also be unease among customers when contact is made with a pet and then with a customer, especially if food is served.

Pets may also not be a good fit for some organizations, depending on the atmosphere and the expectations of customers. Issues may arise when colleagues and customers enter the office and pets act protective of their environment. Pets may become aggressive against unsuspecting guests, employees, or other pets in the workplace, and may experience injuries due to being bitten or scratched. There may be safety concerns, with some employees or customers having fears and phobias of certain animals. Pets may also carry diseases such as parasites (e.g. ringworm), viruses (e.g. rabies), and bacteria (e.g. salmonella) that may be contagious and transferred to humans. Health and safety issues warrant consideration as research in general has already linked allergens, poor hygienic conditions (Dai *et al.*, 2015), and phobias (Muschalla and Linden, 2009) to various employee and organizational health outcomes.

Property damage. Property may also be damaged as a result of accidents (e.g. playfulness) or destructive behavior (e.g. chewing objects, ripping stuffing out of furniture). Pets may cause damage to expensive equipment, particularly if they are left unsupervised, but it may result from accidental behavior such as spilling water from a bowl onto an expensive laptop or a large pet knocking over objects in workspaces that were not optimally designed for pets around. Even when employees are vigilant at monitoring their pets, there may be times that they are absent (e.g. during meetings). Their pet may have a bathroom emergency or mark its territory on company property.

Distraction. Pets may also be viewed as distracting to employees because of the noises they make (e.g. barking at inappropriate times, panting, vocalizing) and the attention that they require, which may interrupt their workflow (Perrine and Wells, 2006). Employees may bring toys to work (e.g. squeaky toys) to ensure that their pets are properly stimulated, but these noises may be distracting to their colleagues. Pets may make sounds when the owner is absent in meetings or on important phone calls. Pets may also be distracting for owners and other employees when they need attention during peak times or activities that require high levels of concentration, or simply, it may be more tempting to spend time with pets, rather than focus on work.

Religious preferences. Pets in the workplace may also be a concern for individuals of various religious backgrounds. Employees who adopt beliefs according to some faiths (e.g. some schools of Islam) consider dogs to be unclean, and may find it impermissible to have contact with dogs in the workplace. Other employees may have issues with neutering their pets because it is contrary to their religion (e.g. Orthodox Judaism). Employees' attachment to their pets can be affected by their religious beliefs. In Hinduism, dogs are of major religious significance, while Buddhism expresses concern for animal welfare but generally deems animals to be inferior creatures.

8. Recommendations

As organizations increasingly consider becoming pet-friendly, this paper offers a set of recommendations for managers and HR professionals to leverage the benefits and minimize concerns associated with workplace pet-friendliness.

8.1 Consider the various forms of pet friendliness

There are different forms of pet-friendliness that organizations can implement, from simple options to more complex efforts. Simple measures include offering employee discounts for pet services, providing veterinary healthcare coverage such as pet insurance, or work flexibility. Another option are pet bereavement days should employees need personal time off during the death of a pet. More complex options include allowing employees the opportunity to bring their pet to work and offering onsite perks such as walking services, pet daycare, outdoor pens, and grooming services. It is recommended that organizations that are hesitant about becoming pet-friendly begin with simple measures and gradually adopt more complex measures. The foremost concern is to take the needs of the workplace into account.

8.2 Gauge employee readiness

Organizations may survey employees to gauge their readiness and determine whether simple or more complex efforts should be adopted. Some employees may challenge the change as a form of constructive dismissal in light of existing employment contracts, on the basis of explicit or implied terms (e.g. employee rights to a safe workplace). Best practices on employee rights and discipline should be extended to matters dealing with pet-friendliness in the workplace.

8.3 Ensure compliance with legal matters

Legal issues are especially salient where organizations also need to ensure compliance with local legislation, building regulations, and other legal matters. Local legislation may require dogs to be leashed at all times on public property. There may also be a ban on certain breeds that are more likely to be involved in a serious incident. As such,

organizations must ensure that they are aware of, and adhering to, legislation that pertains to pets. Once the decision has been made to become pet-friendly, organizations may need to obtain approval from their landlord if they allow employees to bring their pets to work, who may ask for an additional insurance policy to be purchased or levy a pet deposit. Feedback may need to be solicited from neighboring organizations to alleviate any concerns with disturbances (e.g. noise) and interactions (e.g. bringing a dog in and out for a walk). Pet owners need to sign a waiver of liability to release the organization from any responsibility (e.g. property damage, injury). Organizations may ask pet owners to purchase additional liability insurance and specify the minimum coverage amount.

8.4 Balance employee needs

From a recruitment perspective, there may be issues associated with attracting the right talent, who may be more or less attracted to PFWs (e.g. there may be fewer non-pet-owning job applicants). Hiring managers should be diligent in selection procedures so as to balance questions surrounding person-organizational fit (e.g. pet owners fitting with the organizational culture) and taking care to avoid unfair hiring practices. Organizations also need to balance the need for competitive and attractive compensation with the benefits associated with targeted recruitment of pet owners.

8.5 Create comprehensive organizational policies and procedures

Of particular note is the need to have a comprehensive pet program by codifying appropriate behavior through clear policies and practices in employee handbooks, and if necessary, in employment contracts. For example, it would be helpful to indicate how pet conflicts will be managed (e.g. intra- and inter-species) and recognize that not all pets are suitable to spend the day in the office due to issues such as temperament, anxiety, housebreaking problems, and aggression. Another example is a leash policy where pets are leashed in public areas but may be off their leash in closed areas (e.g. office or cubicle), with a posted notice that indicates the presence of the pet. Procedures on how to deal with violations to the policies need to be clearly outlined. For example, a three-strike rule is recommended one that proposes that pets are not permitted back in the workplace when they (or owners) engage in a behavioral breach or non-compliance three times. More severe breaches (e.g. aggressive behavior) can warrant immediate removal.

It is prudent for employees to undergo formal training to raise their awareness of the pet-friendly policies and reduce potential risks. Safety training protocols for interacting with pets (e.g. signs of aggressive behavior) are paramount to ensuring that interactions between animals and individuals (e.g. employees, customers), as well as across individuals (e.g. employee to employee) are collegial.

Clear health and safety guidelines will make tremendous strides at minimizing the potential risks of a PFW. For example, organizations need to pet-proof the workplace (e.g. cover electrical wires, install gates) to prevent accidents from occurring. Organizations can also establish pet-free zones such as restrooms, areas that have safety hazards (e.g. biological or chemical) or important equipment (e.g. computers), food preparation, serving and dining areas, shared spaces such as meeting rooms, and facilities such as a fitness centers and daycares. Owners should ensure that their pets are free of fleas and ticks, and that their pet health records (e.g. vaccinations, veterinarian contact information) are up-to-date.

8.6 Share the responsibility for being a pet-friendly workplace

Being a PFW is a shared responsibility. To increase the success of a pet-friendly stance, organizations need to prepare the physical workplace in advance and consider a trial run. Cleaning supplies need to be on hand should an accident occur and to keep the workplace sanitary. Pet owners have the ongoing responsibility to ensure that the workplace is clean of pet-caused debris and property remains undamaged. If property damage occurs, owners should be financially responsible and provide restitution for pet-related damage. Owners also need to provide pet supplies, oversee waste management, schedule their work breaks around their pet's needs, and leave pets at home on high workload days. They should immediately report accidents to ensure that appropriate measures are taken.

8.7 Regularly audit employee attitudes and pet-friendly measures

It is recommended that organizations regularly audit employee attitudes toward existing pet policies to ensure fair treatment, and to determine the extent of animal allergies and fears among employees. Organizations may need to reevaluate their pet-friendly approach when new employees are hired, especially if allergies or phobias are a concern.

Pet policies and practices need to be formally and regularly evaluated to determine the success of the pet-friendly initiative, provide evidence for the impact that it has had on the workplace, and improve the program for future efforts to be implemented more effectively. It may be helpful to benchmark policies and procedures on similar organizations that have successfully instituted pet-friendly cultures.

9. Directions for future research

Although the personal benefits of pet ownership are well established (e.g. enhanced quality of life), the benefits and concerns for a professional setting warrant further exploration. For example, research could explore differences among employees working for PFWs and non-PFWs on variables with known links to organizational performance such as job satisfaction, engagement, organizational commitment, and well-being. It may also help to identify barriers to the success of PFWs and inform ways to optimize such practices. PFWs may confer their greatest benefits to pet-owning employees relative to non-pet-owning employees. PFWs may also have detrimental effects on some employees (e.g. allergies, phobias, lifestyle preferences). Questions remain as to how the workplace addresses issues where coworkers prefer a pet-free workplace. Acceptance of PFWs across generations may be a salient issue to study as millennials may be more accepting to the trend of pet-friendliness than baby boomers. Qualitative research can also explore acceptance across different employment settings (e.g. healthcare, retail, service) and based on organizational size (e.g. large corporations vs small businesses), as the results may be varied.

10. Conclusion

Our review highlights the overall trend toward becoming pet-friendly and describes the range of possible pet-friendly efforts, from simple to more complex measures. Further, this paper offers recommendations for organizations interested in adopting a pet-friendly approach. A number of potential benefits of PFWs have been cited, which remain speculative at this point. We will not likely see widespread adoption of such practices until they are empirically linked to organizational performance, which highlights the

need to continue studying PFWs. In the meantime, organizations are called on to become more responsive through the range of approaches that we have depicted to contribute to better lives for employees and their pets.

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