

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

Pets in the Office

So recently, a legal blogger posted that he kept parrots in his waiting room. This made me wonder how many other lawyers do this type of thing. Do you have pets in your office? What kind of pets and how'd that come about? Do your clients seem to care?

Thanks for your replies.

Curiously yours,

We have stray cats that we feed. They will come into the office and venture around (with back door open). But we can't pet them.

Has not bothered anyone. I think I have had clients sign up because of it.

Lewis Roberts, Florida

My dog has been coming with me to work since she was a puppy. She is featured on the website. I specifically negotiated my office lease to include her.

She is a bichon-poodle mix, smallish, friendly and well behaved. Most clients and other visitors love her.

Cheers,

Manuella W. Hancock

My last bulldog would hang out occasionally on days I had no clients. My new puppy is too crazy at this point.

Jake C. Eisenstein, Colorado

When I was a baby lawyer, I did per diem work for an attorney who had a parrot in his office. I am an animal lover, but I have to admit, the bird was a bit annoying.

Jeena R. Belil, New York

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

<https://www.eff.org/about/staff/kodi>

Most likely, the only office pet who also blogs.

James S. Tyre, California

sorry to be the grinch but i would not go to any professional who had a dog or cat in the office where i could see it. fish, maybe..in a tank! if i saw the animal, i would turn around and leave...

Joyce Williams

We have saltwater tanks - everyone loves them - the kids of course, but actually the adults also watch - something is always happening in those tanks....

David Rubin, Missouri

I'm with you Joyce. I love animals as much as anybody, but they don't belong in the office...another pet peeve of mine is females going barefoot in the office.

Bobby Lott

But males going barefoot--a-ok? ;) I'm kidding and am assuming that the women you're thinking of are doing this because their feet hurt from heels--in which case they should probably start wearing flats.

Niki

Nicole Black

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

It depends on the practice. One of my favorite attorneys brings her dog to the office, and he's a big hit with her clientele. If I owned my own office space, I would consider having an office cat, although I would have concerns about pet allergies.

I don't mind people going barefooted in the office, either. Although, it's probably not a good idea to assume that other people wouldn't have problems with it. (Keep your shoes close, in other words).

You know...it's my office. I get to develop my practice's culture. So does the Parrot lawyer. If my potential clients don't like the culture here, they probably aren't a good fit for me.

Jennifer Moore, Minnesota

I work from home, so of course my two Lab mixes are here as well. For the most part, Buddy (a mama's boy) will sit under my desk. Athena is generally on the couch. It doesn't really cause a problem, unless of course I'm on the phone with clients and they start to bark. Thankfully that doesn't happen often, and if it does I can hush them pretty quickly. Then I apologize to the client and explain that we have office dogs. I haven't had anyone say anything negative about it. On quite a number of occasions, having the dogs around has lowered my blood pressure after a particularly stressful phone call and getting up to let them out reminds me to take breaks to regroup.

I have to admit, I do walk around my office barefoot and occasionally in my jammies. :) But that's a perk of working from home. I have also been known to do work at 10pm when there is nothing good on TV. Another perk.

Morag
Just A (barefoot) Paralegal

Yes, Niki, I probably should have specified that.

Occasionally, I will be at a firm and some of the women will have on a beautiful suit but no shoes...

Bobby Lott

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

My dog used to come with me. He is friendly and livens up any office. Plus he listens and calms people down.

Mitchell P. Goldstein, Virginia

No pets. I'm in the grinch crowd as well (except for fish - everyone loves fish and they don't cause allergic reactions). Some clients may love furry friends, but others will turn around and leave. My husband can't be in a house that has pets, and would leave any office that has them. I just think it is unprofessional and inconsiderate of those who have allergies or are afraid of animals (plenty of people are terrified of even tiny dogs). I'd find a bird in any office (particularly a parrot) annoying.

Now, I'm a big fan of the birds here in Florida, and we have cranes and egrets outside our office all the time. But I don't invite them inside.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

I know of one attorney on this list who has two office cats. I like them, and I suppose his firm's clients do as well.

Shauna Rose Pussycat has come to the office for a day here and there when she couldn't be at the apartment (moving, repairmen, etc.). The clients who came in while she was here didn't mind, and one even played with her (THAT got her out from behind the computer).

I'm not sure if I'll bring her back, since the last time she was here she asked for a pay raise, better benefits, and more sunbeams to lay in.

Greg Zbylut, California

Greg, I didn't know that cats sunbathe. My dog does it all the time!

Mike Wright

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

If I had a choice between 2 equally good professionals and one had a dog I could visit with, I'd pick the one with the dog. I personally don't bring mine because going downtown freaks him out a bit, but if I had a calm dog I could see great benefits coming from it. Going through a rough divorce? it's ok, Fido here will cheer you up while I write up your paperwork. If it makes the attorney happy (and all dog parents I know are happiest when their pets are around) and they do better work because of it, they'll have enough loyal clients to make up for the loss of ones who don't want to come to an office with animals. (Especially if you're up front about it on your website so people can make the choice ahead of time and not be put off by the surprise)

--

Kate M. Forrest

I'm highly allergic to cats. They set off my asthma. I love them, but they don't love me.

Jeena R. Belil

There is a Chinese belief that one should keep living things in the office to absorb one's stress (or so I have been told). There was a lawyer in the firm I started off in who had a fish tank in his office but his fish kept dying. Finally, we all had pity on the fish and put plastic fish in his tank and would not let him sacrifice any more living fish. It made me think that the belief may have been true because he had a lot of stress.

Naomi C. Fujimoto, Hawaii

I work from home. I haven't worn shoes to work in 3 years. The dog joins me when she feels like it.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

I, too, work from home, and the dogs and I are happy. When I was in-house as general counsel to a consulting firm, the dog that is now an old man came to the office every day and generally just sat in my office. When the business was sold to a larger international company and we became their Portland office, they continued to allow the dog. They were skeptical, but the entire work force said "he stays."

I think having the dog was overall a bonus and made a good impression on people. But one does need to be sensitive to the fact that not everyone is keen on the canine employee, and not all dogs would be suited for the job. We worked with that. If visitors and clients liked dogs, he was there. If they didn't, or if they were allergic, he stayed in my office.

As for the bare feet -- I'm on the shoeless side, have been since my first legal job. And I've never worn heels. Same rule applies, I would think -- be sensitive to those who care, and have your shoes ready to put on if the boss says "shoe time."

shoeless and happy in Oregon,
Laura Kosloff

I always said if I had a parrot its vocabulary would consist primarily of curse words so, I would not, unfortunately, be able to have a parrot in my office - might drive away clients. But bless the parrot lawyer - his mouth is under control!

In all seriousness though, one of the things I'm looking forward to about going solo is that I'll be able to have my dog at work with me (since work will be home). And, if and when I do move into an outside office, I'd like to have my dog there, too. I interned at a firm that happened to have several employees who had pugs so every Friday, the pugs came to work. We all looked forward to pug Fridays! Lots of people are calmed by pets and people tend to work harder, and longer, when their pets are with them at work, so pets at work can be good for the productivity end of business, too. Of course, if you don't like dogs or cats (or parrots?) or if you're allergic, you'd hardly be more productive with a pet in your workspace. But, for those of us who do love em, and don't itch when they're around, I think it's a great idea.

Jessica Gorman (and her dog)

SoloSez Popular Threads, June 2012

One of my dogs frequently goes to work with me on a rotating basis.

There are times -- mainly when I know someone is coming in who does not like dogs -- when they stay home or are crated in the back room.

The oldest of the current group is a registered therapy dog, and few people have objected. One visitor who did turned out to have been convicted of multiple counts of animal cruelty, and he was uncomfortable because from the moment he walked in the door, my dog quietly made certain he was between the two of us.

I could always tell when my first dog thought someone was seriously dangerous, because she would become ****very**** quiet and unobtrusively make sure she was situated so the person could not easily get to any of us without going through her.

That same dog at one point sat in the arms of a crime victim while she cried as she talked about her life.

Perhaps professionalism is sometimes overrated at the expense of humanity?

On the other front, I would ****never**** go barefoot in my office. Some people are rude and don't remove their overshoes before coming in.

Anita Fuoss, South Dakota

We have one office cat who lives at the office 24/7. Very recently she has taken to meowing very, very loudly all the time except when I hold her or she is sleeping or eating. I'm told that when I am not in the office she is even louder and more insistent on being heard.

Roger Rosen
