Who let the dogs in?

With more than a third of the companies on Campaign's 2020 Best Places to Work list indicating they either allow employees to bring their own dog to work or have an office dog, it's clear that the idea that canines can help relieve stress at work and improve efficiency is a popular one. Credited with being an icebreaker and increasing the amount of exercise employees do, thus creating a healthier workforce, the idea is gaining ground. It is backed by initiatives such as abringyourdogtoworkday. Started in 2014 by pet care brand Hownd and charity All Dogs Matter, each year thousands of people take to social media to share workplace "pooch selfies".

Another example is Pets as Therapy, launched in 1983. It takes dogs into care homes, prisons, schools and hospitals, all potentially areas of high stress. The leap to include workplaces is not too great a bound. "People might open up and share things with the dog. The dog is a non-judgemental listener. It gives magic back to you that reduces stress levels and we have so many testimonials saying it works," Matthew Robinson, Pets as Therapy national volunteer and events manager, says. A range of large companies are getting on board with dogs at work, giving employees a reason to go out for a walk and escape for a while to reduce stress levels. As Robinson points out: "If someone is struggling due to stress and anxiety, they're not going to be creative, but if they have a dog with them, it can reduce stress."

Of course, before having a dog in the office, workplaces are advised to carry out due diligence to make sure no employees are phobic or allergic to them. But, really, who wouldn't want to have their best friend alongside them all day?
You don’t have to like the beach to work at 3WhiteHats, but it helps. The agency’s Falmouth Harbour location not only boasts views of the sea, but also access to a private beach and watersports, meaning the team can head out on company paddle boards or go out for a swim during their lunch break. Flexible working hours, an extra day’s holiday every year and a home-cooked team lunch on Fridays are also some of the perks. But it’s not all play, the agency offers a training budget and, after five years’ service, employees are given a travel voucher and the option to take a six-month sabbatical.

At Spin, there are two holiday allowance options – either 25 days or 20 days’ holiday plus 20 days’ remote working. The agency’s flexible working policy is its most popular benefit because it gives employees the opportunity to work the hours that suit them. There are also weekly meetings hosted by the chief executive, as well as a Tuesday night club, an opportunity for employees to create and start a new business outside Spin. The driven, collaborative and fun environment is complemented by the office dog.

Committed to delivering measurable results for clients, StrategyQ also rewards its employees with schemes such as annual awards where winners are given a city break in a five-star hotel plus £500, and a monthly nomination for most-valued player; the winner gets an extra day off and dinner out. It also runs a “stress buddy” scheme for colleagues so they can lean on each other in times of stress. The agency says the initiative has been a valuable way to build trust and relationships not only between employees, who also have access to a business psychologist.

The methodology

Campagne’s Best Places to Work celebrates employers who have proved they know what it takes to create environments where people love to come to work. Identifying and recognising those outstanding workplaces in a joint effort by Campaign and Best Companies Group. The programme is open to all publicly or privately held organisations within the ad agency, media, and marketing industries. To be eligible for consideration, organisations must have at least 15 employees working in the UK.

The survey process was managed by Best Companies Group (BCG), an independent workplace excellence research firm, which managed the registration process, conducted the two-part survey process, evaluated the data and, ultimately, selected the employers that were good enough to make the list.

Part two of the assessment (three-quarters of each organisation’s score) involved the confidential 78-question Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey (EES), which was used to evaluate the employers’ workplace experience and culture.

While the survey process and evaluation was free, participating organisations have the option to purchase the BCG Employee Feedback Report, which summarises the employee data collected through the survey process. In addition to the employee opinion data, the report also includes transcript data written comments, as well as benchmarking data from the winning and non-winning organisations. This report aims to help companies understand their workplace better and equip them with the information to make improvements.

For more information, visit www.campaignbestplaces.com or email Katrina Heimbach at KHeimbach@BestCompaniesGroup.com.