

# CALIFORNIA BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Pet-Friendly Workplaces Are On The Rise. Here's Why Fuse Said Yes To Pets

Having pets at work isn't new, but there is a definite rise in the number of pet-friendly employers in recent years. Fuse Integration, in Kearny Mesa, is just one firm that says "yes" to pets.

### Why Welcome Pets At Fuse?

Fuse has never been afraid to do things differently. In fact, the warfighter-focused engineering and design firm has built its business developing advanced defense solutions that push the envelope on what is possible when it comes to networking and communicating in the battlespace. It has a custom, creative workspace that uniquely reflects the company's distinct quirky, fun, work-hard, play-hard culture.

When it came time to decide whether pets belonged at work, it's possible that the company was influenced by its military ties. CEO Sumner Lee started his career as a naval aviator and more than 40% of the company's 90-plus team members have a military background. The U.S. Department of Defense has long supported active service military pet owners, recognizing the value that pets bring to military personnel and their families. To provide a sense of scope, a recent DOD press release announcing reimbursable pet expenses due to permanent change of station estimated that the new allowance could be used by 227,000 service members!

Regardless of military background, company leaders decided early in the company's journey that pets would be welcome at Fuse facilities. They understood the many benefits to team members from a work-life balance perspective — and to the company itself.

### Benefits Of Pets At Work

Having one's (well-behaved) pet at work is intuitively a plus for pet parents. It turns out that



*Dogs for a walk at Fuse*

it's not just the pet owners who experience the benefits.

- **Positive Attitude.** Dog cuisine manufacturer CESAR Canine Cuisine found that 93% of dog owners say that having their dog at work boosts their positive attitude.
- **Stress Relief.** Certainly, pet parents experience stress relief by having their much-loved companions with them during work hours. This benefit extends, too, to non-pet owners who enjoy the company (and entertainment) of furry or fuzzy friends, as well.
- **Productivity.** Employees who take breaks to care for their pet are often more productive than those who push on through. They come back to the task refreshed and focused.
- **Connection.** This one is important for employee wellbeing. A Central Michigan University study found that having a dog in a group office

setting encouraged people to be more cooperative, communicative, and friendly compared with groups with no dog.

Whatever the research says, Fuse supports the positive impact and their team members welcome pets at work.

### Business Benefits

As more and more employees are returning to office settings versus working remote, having the ability to bring your pet is certainly a personal convenience and comfort factor, but the benefits extend to employers as well.

- **An environment that supports productivity.** Being able to have such a large part of one's personal environment with them increases comfort level at work and it sure is more convenient for pet care and attention throughout the day — allowing one to focus on work instead of worrying about your pet at home.
- **Recruitment and Retention.** A pet-friendly workplace helps attract and retain talented workers who might otherwise be lured to a competitor.
- **Positive Work Relationships.** According to HABRI, the Human Animal Bond Research Institute, “Employees at pet-friendly workplaces are 3x more likely to experience positive working relationships with their supervisors and coworkers” compared with non-pet-friendly places.

For Fuse, having pets at work just makes sense. There is a positive work culture where people really like each other and love what they do. For them, having pets in the mix is a fun and smart element of their work community. Fuse even has a “Pets of Fuse” wall where proud team members can bring in pictures of their pets to display for everyone!

### Tips For Making it Work

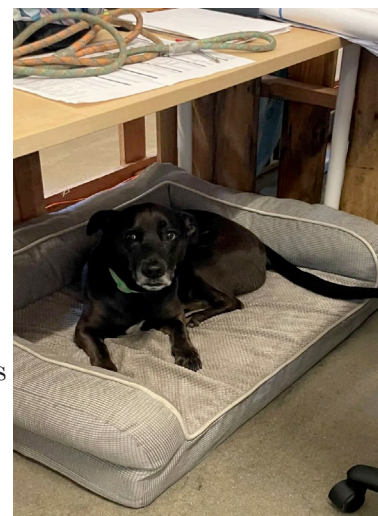
It's easier to make a pet policy more inclusive over time, but tough to pull back from good intentions.

Fuse offers these tips for a successful pet-friendly workplace:

- **Understand and comply** with building and community guidelines
- **Clearly outline** what's allowed (and what's not) when it comes to pet species, size, hygiene, and behavior requirements
- **Remember** that service animals are exempt from pet policies
- **Start slow.** Start by inviting pets on special occasions (Take Your Pet to Work Day, Furry Fridays, etc.). For pets that are new to the space, use a trial period to ensure a good fit
- **Prepare to adjust** your practices to support positive employee experiences
- **Say yes** to pet owners who are responsible for their pets and respectful of others' pets while on-site

### Pet Parents Can Advance Their Careers At Fuse

Fuse supports pet parents' wellbeing, productivity, and collaboration by welcoming their pets at work. They are free to explore, learn, and grow — taking on new opportunities and advancing their careers — without having to worry about the care and companionship of their beloved pets.



*Dog under a desk at Fuse*

Fuse is a fast-growing company that is always on the lookout for smart, skilled, and passionate team members who are seeking meaningful work that enhances the capabilities of our nation's warfighters. If they happen to be pet parents, that's simply a plus! ■