

# EFFECT OF A WORKPLACE CANINE COMPANION: Analysis of a survey evaluation of employees

## OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the physiological and psychological effects of the presence of a daily canine companion in a group of approximately 30 employees.

## METHODS

We administered a survey that aimed to identify changes due to the presence of a canine companion in daily exercise/movement from desk or chair, employee relationships, effect on company image, and levels of stress, creativity, and mood in employees.

## RESULTS

Of the 30 employees polled, 21 completed the survey. The survey found that the presence of a canine companion increased overall daily exercise/movement from desk or chair. Nearly 91% of respondents answered that they stood up additional times throughout the day, and 6 employees responded that they took the canine companion outside to walk on a regular basis.

The survey found that the canine companion had a positive impact on employee relationships. Nearly 82% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the presence of a canine companion increased the strength of their work relationships, with only 5% disagreeing.

The survey results also show that the canine companion had an effect on the company image. Approximately 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the canine companion increased the company's "cool" or "trendsetting factor". Another 95% agreed or strongly agreed that being allowed a canine companion was an advantage over other workplaces that did not allow them.

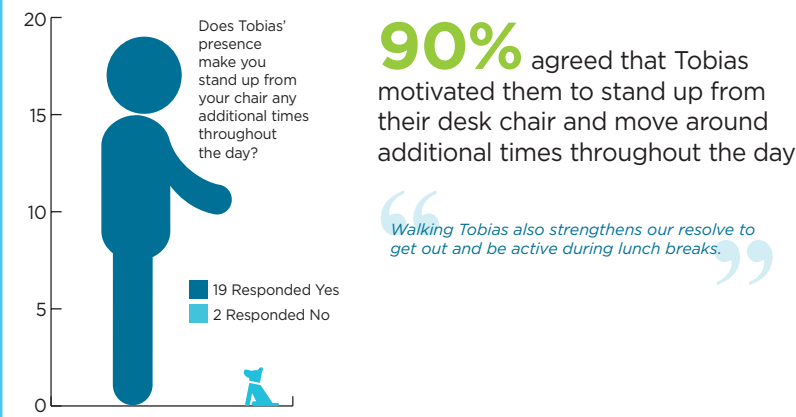
Survey results show that a canine companion had a positive effect on employees stress levels. Almost 95% of respondents claimed a canine companion helped them feel less stress. Nearly 53% of respondents answered that a canine companion made them feel less intimidated about work tasks, projects, or meetings. Respondents all agreed or strongly agreed that the canine companion elevated their mood.

Finally, there is some evidence that a canine companion helped employees form creative solutions for work issues. Just under 35% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the presence of a canine companion helped form creative solutions, whereas approximately 15% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## RESEARCH EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE BENEFITS OF TOBIAS, OUR WORKPLACE CANINE COMPANION

### IMPROVE EMPLOYEE HEALTH

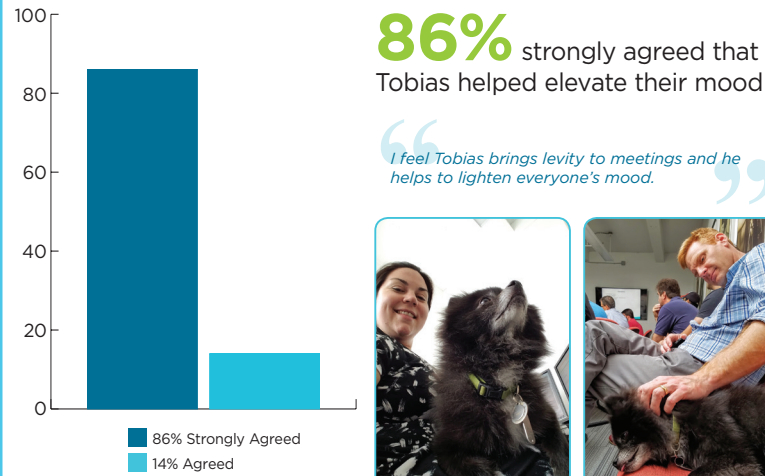
**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the health benefits of pets include: decreased blood pressure, cholesterol levels, triglyceride levels, and feelings of loneliness. In addition, the CDC states that pets can increase one's opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities and opportunities for socialization.



**90%** agreed that Tobias motivated them to stand up from their desk chair and move around additional times throughout the day

*Walking Tobias also strengthens our resolve to get out and be active during lunch breaks.*

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
A 2013 study published by the *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare* studied the effects of companion animals and found that they can "enhance interactions with other people and help alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation".



*I feel Tobias brings levity to meetings and he helps to lighten everyone's mood.*



### IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COWORKERS

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
A 2013 study published by the *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare* studied the effects of having dogs as companion animals and their impact on social capital. The study found that companion animals could "facilitate social support and interpersonal communications" and that these animals "serve as social catalysts providing a sense of social integration and enhance interactions with other people".

**53%** agreed that Tobias helped strengthen relationships with coworkers

*Yes, I strongly agree that our interactions with Tobias have strengthened our work relationships with co-workers and team-members (such as when a group of us take Tobias for a walk).*

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
A 2005 study published by the *Social Science & Medicine* journal studied the effect of pets as social capital and found that having a pet companion increased potential opportunities for social interaction between neighbors.

In the workplace setting, a canine companion may help build social relations between employees. Improving relationships between employees can result in greater collaboration.



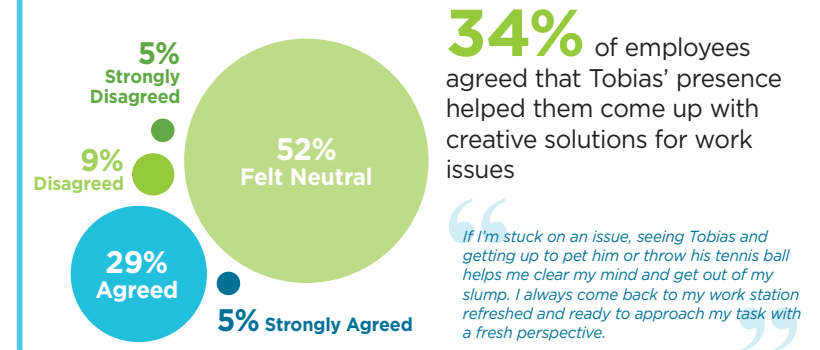
*Tobias has increased interaction between staff members that I normally do not interact with on a daily basis, leading to team-building.*

**"All of my friends want to work at an office with a dog like Tobias."**

### BOOST CREATIVITY

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
A 2014 study published by *The Journal of Experimental Psychology* studied the effect of walking on creative thinking and found that walking, as opposed to sitting, could potentially increase creative output by approximately 60%.

In a workplace setting, employees may be more apt to get up out of their seat to either play with their canine companion or take them for a walk. Daily exercise may provide mental health benefits to employees in addition to physical health benefits.

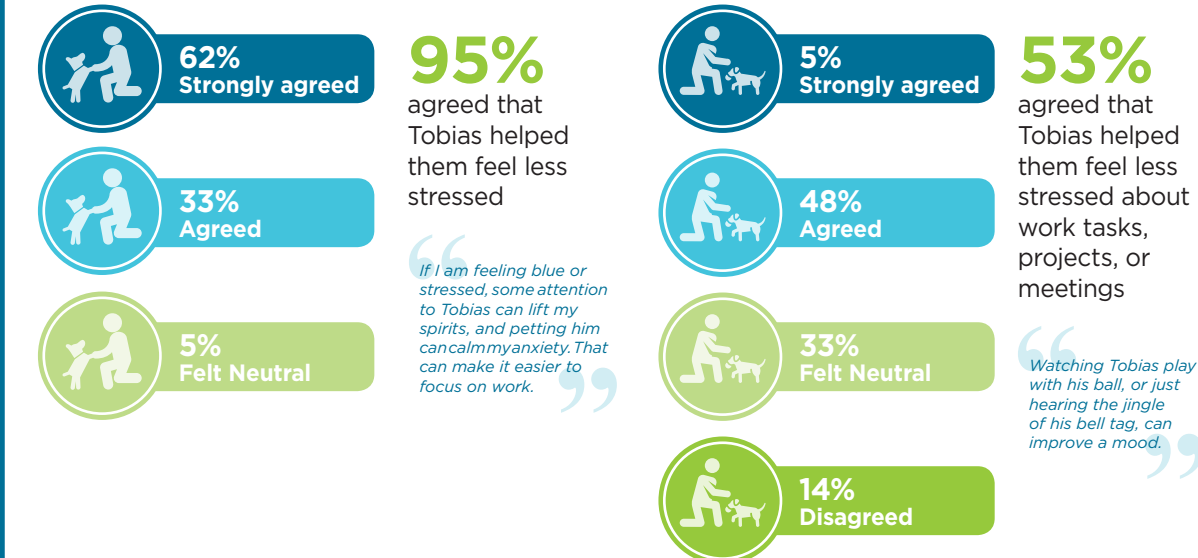


*If I'm stuck on an issue, seeing Tobias and getting up to pet him or throw his tennis ball helps me clear my mind and get out of my slump. I always come back to my work station refreshed and ready to approach my task with a fresh perspective.*

### LOWER STRESS

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
A 2012 study published by the Virginia Commonwealth University found that employees who bring their dogs to work with them had decreased levels of the stress hormone cortisol. During the study, employees who brought their dogs to work experienced an 11% decrease in stress levels by the end of the work day, while their office-pet-lacking counterparts experienced a stress level increase of up to 70%.

A 2012 study published by *Frontiers in Psychology* found that the action of petting a dog can increase levels of the stress-reducing hormone oxytocin and further decrease production of the stress hormone cortisol.



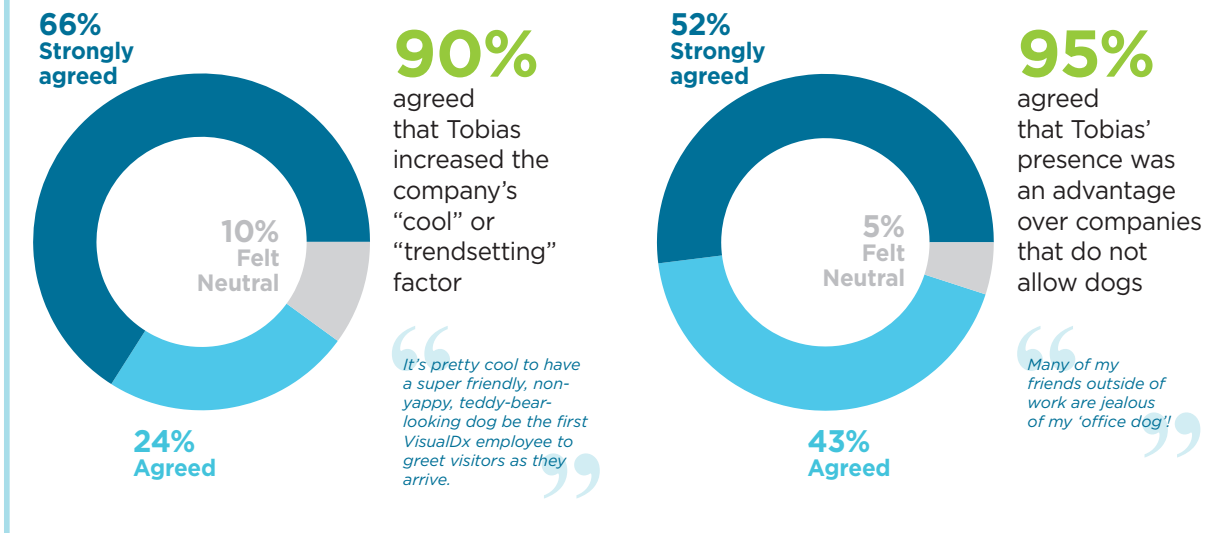
*If I am feeling blue or stressed, some attention to Tobias can lift my spirits, and petting him can calm my anxiety. That can make it easier to focus on work.*

**53%** agreed that Tobias helped them feel less stressed about work tasks, projects, or meetings

*Watching Tobias play with his ball, or just hearing the jingle of his bell tag, can improve a mood.*

### COOL FACTOR

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**  
An article from NBC News reported that in 2015, 8% of American workplaces allowed employees to bring pets to work, an increase by 5% since 2013. This 8% includes companies one might expect, such as Google, Amazon, Etsy, and Petco, but it also includes some surprises, such as Bissel. The article speculates that the driving force behind increasingly pet friendly workplaces is millennial influence. Clif Bar spokesperson, Keely Wachs, states "We feel a responsibility to respect and invest in people's lives beyond their workstations... Millennials really connect with our purpose-driven approach and appreciate how we invest in their whole lives..." The increasing number of organizations that allow pets at work reflects an evolving attitude towards the American worker's overall wellbeing, and that's on the inside track!



*It's pretty cool to have a super friendly, non-yappy, teddy-bear-looking dog be the first VisualDx employee to greet visitors as they arrive.*

*Many of my friends outside of work are jealous of my 'office dog!'*

## CONCLUSION

Our survey results found that the employees surveyed experienced both physiological and psychological benefits by having an office canine companion present in the workplace daily. These benefits include increased movement from desk or chair, increased strength of employee relationships, a positive effect on company image, elevation of mood, decreased levels of employee stress, and somewhat increased levels of creativity.



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