

# BACK STORY

## MEET OUR NEWEST ASSOCIATE, JACK RUSSELL

BY CARLI L. SANSONE, ESQ.

**Receptionist:** “Good morning, Law Firm, how may I direct your call?”

**Client:** “Can you please transfer me to Jack?”

**Receptionist:** “I’m sorry, we have two Jacks in the office.”

**Client:** “Oh I’m sorry, Jack Russell the Terrier.”

**Receptionist:** “Please hold.”

The days of leaving your dog at home in a kennel or dropping your dog off at doggy-day-care are trends of the past. Along with employees at big corporations such as Google, Amazon, GoDaddy, Mars Inc., Clif Bar and Build-A-Bear to name a few, it is becoming increasingly popular for lawyers to bring their dogs to work. Say goodbye to the hideous plastic plant in the corner of a lawyer’s office.

The office décor now consists of an executive desk, credenza, computer, filing cabinet, lawyer’s chair, client chairs, antique mirror, and of course, a dog bed. Smoke breaks are being replaced with potty breaks, and water coolers with water bowls. What better way for a lawyer to show potential clients how authoritative he or she is than keeping a Chihuahua in the down-stay position during a 30-minute consultation? (A potential client will almost certainly hire a lawyer after dry-swallowing two Benadryl to counteract the allergic reaction to the lawyer’s St. Bernard.)

All joking aside, the obvious liability risks of dog-friendly law firms cannot be ignored. Lawyers who bring their dogs

to work probably worry about the risk of malpractice because, in general, lawyers worry about malpractice. However, does a lawyer who brings a dog to work fully appreciate the inherent risk in exposing clients and employees to the dog? The lawyer must be extremely confident that the dog is just a lick, but even a “licker” can turn an enclosed space into a dust storm with just one shake. Aside from the exposure to allergens and dog hair, what about the odd, unexpected chance that the lawyer’s dog will somehow hurt someone in the office? A client or employee who is bitten by a lawyer’s dog could take the lawyer to court, and would almost certainly recover damages for any injuries.

Lawyers bringing their dogs to work would undoubtedly argue that the benefits derived from having their dogs with them outweigh any risk of the dogs biting a paralegal. There is evidence that companion animals help with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. In a profession where mental health issues, substance abuse, emotional breakdowns and overall stress are as common as law degrees, dogs into the workspace may be the least of a managing partner’s worries. The law firm might have to increase cleaning services, but at least their dog-loving attorneys won’t be having mental breakdowns in the middle of the work-week due to the never-ending stress of being a lawyer. If every lawyer who likes dogs had a furry little friend in the office, the legal profession would perhaps be a happier place. **NL**

### The author and her canine companions.



**CARLI L. SANSONE** received her J.D. from the William S. Boyd School of Law where she earned CALI Awards in animal law for her article on dog breed-specific legislation and in bioethics for her article on parental rights in gestational carrier arrangements. Immediately before joining Pecos Law Group, Carli served as law clerk to the Honorable Vincent Ochoa, judge in the Eighth Judicial District Court, Family Division. Carli also served as an extern for the Honorable Adriana Escobar, judge in the Eighth Judicial District Court.