

Time off for good behaviour: Japan firm rewards non-smokers

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Non-smoking employees at one Japanese firm are getting six additional days' holiday to compensate for the time their colleagues spend puffing away at work.

Piala, a Tokyo-based online commerce consulting and [marketing company](#), kicked off the programme in September after an employee complained about the time lost by smoking colleagues who frequently disappear to light up.

"Because our office is located on the 29th floor ... it takes at least 10 minutes for a smoker to go down to a common smoking room in the basement and come back," spokesman Hirotaka Matsushima told AFP.

"But at the same time, it's true that smoking room conversations are mostly about work ... they exchange ideas and consult each other," he said.

"So we decided it's better to give rewards (to non-smokers) than punish the smokers," added Matsushima.

Since the start of the programme on September 1, four employees out of 42 smokers have kicked the habit. There are 120 people employed in total at the firm.

"If they successfully keep their promise over the year, they'll be given six extra days of paid leave," he said.

Japan lags behind other [developed nations](#) in terms of smoke-free policies and the [social pressure](#) to quit is less intense.

Unlike many western countries, smoking is permitted in certain sections of restaurants.

Even so, most companies in Japan have banned [smoking](#) in the workplace and set up [smoking rooms](#) and tobacco use has been falling, in line with a broader global trend.

According to health ministry data, some 28 percent of men smoke in Japan and nine percent of women.

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