

WorkWell

A Deloitte podcast series to empower your well-being



The evolution of the human-animal bond with Mark Cushing

Jen Fisher: Hi WorkWell listeners. I am really excited to share that my book *Work Better Together* is officially out. Conversations with WorkWell guests and feedback from listeners like you inspired this book. It's all about how to create a more human centered workplace. And as we return to the office for many of us, this book can help you move forward into post pandemic life with strategies and tools to strengthen your relationships and focus on your wellbeing. It's available now from your favorite book retailer.

If you follow me on social media, you have probably seen pictures of my adorable furbaby, Fiona. She is my beloved Jack Russell Terrier and she is the light of my life. Our pets are treasured members of our families and that's a good thing, because they help improve and enhance our well-being in so many ways.

This is the WorkWell podcast series. Hi, I am Jen Fisher, Chief Well-being Officer for Deloitte and I am so pleased to be here with you today to talk about all things well-being. I am here with Mark Cushing. He is the founder and CEO of the Animal Policy Group, an advocacy organization for pets. He is also the author of the book, *Pet Nation*, the inside story of how companion animals are transforming our homes, culture, and economy.

Mark, welcome to the show.

Mark Cushing: Great to be on it.

Jen Fisher: Yeah I am excited to dig in. So, I actually, usually start off by asking my guests to tell me about their story. But I feel like it's more appropriate to start this conversation by asking you about your own pets and what their names are.

Mark Cushing: Now I'll tell you what we have. Now we have a two-year-old puppy. He is a Papillon and that is the French word for butterflies. So they have big ears, and high energy personalities, to say the least. But also, my wife is a serious connoisseur of cats and we have not one, not two, but three Bengal kittens, and if anyone your audience knows Bengals, they are special breed of wildcat. They are like Olympic athletes. And they are extraordinary, just to watch, you just laugh, except when you are picking up a vase they knocked over but laughing all the way. But the names of all of our pets were always for designers, so Louie is really for Louis Vuitton, we have Eve and Vera for Yves Saint Laurent and Vera Wang and our youngest four-month-old boy kitten is Jimmy for Jimmy Choo. So hope you love the names, yes.

Jen Fisher: (Laughs) Got it, I love that. OK, so now we can transition to you. Let us hear your story. How did you become passionate about pets and get into what you are doing today?

Mark Cushing: Like so many great things in life, it was more accidental than anything as far as the work side. I have always enjoyed pets, but I was a business trial lawyer for a lot of years and then a partner in an international law firm based in DC. I was actually at the Ottawa, Canada Airport catching a flight back to Washington in 2005 and got a phone call from what is still the largest veterinary practice group in the world and they were leading a coalition, really the entire pet industry related to an issue called microchipping, which is one way you will identify pet. And it was controversial at the time and I got a solution through Congress that they hadn't expected to get, and they have been quite frustrated, so it had the wonderful effect of fooling people into thinking I am smart and effective, to be able to have the success we had, and I thought that would be a client, like Deloitte has clients and you never know what else will continue. 15 years later I have got a team of eight that work with me and I have been full time and the pet health care, pet animal welfare space, pet product and just overall pet advocacy space since 2007 and it just expands by the week, it seems like. It's been a good ride and along the way I wrote the book, *Pet Nation: an inside story of how companion animals transforming our homes, culture and economy* which they wanted this inside story of what we have all seen, but nobody really put it altogether serving in one book. A complete transformation how pets relate to people in America and their role in American culture. And as you know, they're everywhere. You can't go anywhere now and certainly not see dogs and I can remember a time when they were really accessories or sideshows. And they certainly weren't in hospitals, they weren't in restaurants, weren't in hotels, on planes and so forth, and it's a very different world we are in now. And I think a better world for it, but it has been a surprising and fun ride and hopefully it keeps going.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, I think it's a better world for it too, so no offense to the humans out there, but I often say that I like animals more than I like humans sometimes. So I can certainly relate to that, but you know, you talk about in your book, you do talk about our love for pets as a cultural transformation. So can you dig into that and kind of talk more about how our feelings for pets have changed over time and why?

Mark Cushing: Yeah, that's a great question and it wasn't like somebody just announced one day that pet needed to come inside and be treated like kings and queens and sleep on top of our beds and live the way they live now, but I looked deep and hard at how it occurred and was in the childhood of Baby Boomers to start with and what a couple of things happened. One, was you began to see in the media, then it was television and commercials and there is no social media and the most famous dog ever named Lassie and that show people turned on and they watched Lassie, every Sunday evening. Lassie's author, believe it or not, the original creator of that dog was a friend of Charles Dickens. So you can argue that it was in the early 1800s, but in truth, Baby Boomers in the US saw this dog loyal, friendly, fun, active, by the side of Timmy at all times and then you began to see Rin Tin Tin and a whole series of media dogs, some were cartoons, Scooby-Doo and like that.

And then the next step, kind of that finished the media piece that just exposed people to a different way to look at pets were commercials. They had the craziness or the brilliant idea to put on ads that show the car going along a California coastal highway, the window open, and in the passenger seat, the German or Golden Retriever. And that was it. They didn't tell you what the car was, he didn't about the

engine, mileage, nothing, and they figured out just showing that car and brand next to a happy dog, was a magic trick. It was a secret sauce and their sales reflected it. So you had people surrounded by pets. Just seeing them in a different light and it was very powerful and then you began to have people push the envelope to where they could take a pet. And while this was all going on, the underpinning of the entire change in our relationship to pets began to spread. And what was that? It's called the human-animal bond. It's a medical fact that when people engage with pets, their oxytocin level goes up, which is a source of joy and relaxation and calm and pleasure in your brain and your cortisol level declines, and that's the source of stress and anxiety, nervousness, anxiousness. Basically, we just feel better around pets and we didn't all go to the library and study this and buy a dog or adopt a cat, but it became known and then a whole literature developed around it. My wife, she chairs anatomy at Mayo Clinic Medical School here in Scottsdale. So she has a little bit to do with people and human health. Though, of course, these are cadavers in her case for teaching anatomy, but she will take our cats and dog every time, including over her husband, I am sure no.

So you began to see this movement of pets inside, people were closer to them now, right? They were just out in your backyard or your courtyard. They were inside, this oxytocin thing was happening, it wasn't named and called out, but literature then developed that explained it. Then you see the explosion of studies showing how autistic families work better with a dog involved. Dogs are no longer banned in hospitals, they are therapy dogs in every hospital in America. They are part of the treatment plan. Kids going into surgery need less medication if they have been with their dog for the hour before the procedure.

And on and on and on, and so it was, as I say, it was a revolution where the dogs and cats didn't ask for it, right? It wasn't like they said we are going to refuse to be nice unless we get fleece pads and we sleep on top of the bed and designer dog food and so forth. But and then the coup de grace was social media stepping in. And people became, as you know, I am sure with your friends and colleagues, became their own directors and film editors, namely of their cat, their dog. And people couldn't get enough of it. Instagram, you name it. I mean it's all about pets and it became this connector between somebody in San Diego with a German Shepherd and somebody in Portland, Maine, and they will never meet, but they are in constant flowing back and forth, seeing each other dogs, doing things, funny things, you know heroic things. And it was this force that was happening. We kind of saw it sort of and then all of a sudden we just woke up one day and went, "My God dogs are everywhere," and New York is my favorite part of this story, because if you go down any, I know, it's with COVID, it's less common, but when you go down any street in Manhattan, you will just see a dog walker with like eight Afghan that are like horses. And people have to kind of walk around them. They don't, get off the sidewalk when you are coming like, it is that your territory, not theirs. And it is a great small-d democratic leveler, right? Two people meet with the dog who would never have settled out of each other. They probably wouldn't even have had eye contact. And if you walk a dog and you see someone with a dog, you stop. It's a 15-minute conversation. You don't talk about where'd you go to school, what kind of car you drive, where do you work, how much money you make. None of that: what is your dog's name, what she like to eat, what she like to play with, what is your favorite toy and you're friends. There is this powerful effect that has been captured in an academic phrase, but it's pretty easy to understand, called the social capital of pets. There's a study done in Perth from the western edge of Australia. I got a chance to meet with the principal scientists involved and we duplicated it in San Diego, Portland, Oregon where I am from originally and Nashville. And what did it show? Try to figure out what makes a neighborhood or a

community work, reduces stress, builds trust, neighbors got to know each other. There is just a general goodwill at play in the community versus some other community. What is the factor? Is it churches, schools, sports, music, politics (I am sure not) or pets. And guess what? You know the answer, pets won. In every study, it was pets. Which shocked me and I have never assigned it that special status and that has just tied it all together so that adds up to what I called my book *Pet Nation* and it's not a fad. It's not stopping anytime soon. It's really a whole transformation, and millennials and Gen Zs now are the biggest pet owning group in the country. They had pets as kids. You think their children are going to have pets?. They are going to have more pets. Not one dog, two dogs, not one dog in a camp, but one or two, so it's quite a story.

Jen Fisher: Yeah. I mean, thank you, so much of that resonates with me. I think in particular I have a Jack Russell Terrier. Her name is Fiona and when I walk her, I don't know the names of the owners of the other dogs, but I know all the dogs names. (Laughs)

Mark Cushing: That tells the story right there.

Jen Fisher: Yeah! There are people that I see every single day and our dogs play with each other on their walks and I play with their dogs and they play with my dogs and we talk all about our dogs. But I don't know anything about the owner.

Mark Cushing: You actually walk up and say hi to the dog.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, yeah.

Mark Cushing: It is not funny, and you don't think it's rude to not say, "No by the way. Steve, nice to see you." It's like you don't even know Steve's name.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, so and I mean, when I think about social capital, especially like in the workplace in particular, but you know probably because of COVID when everything for us transitioned to a virtual world, I mean, I was on a call yesterday and the person's cat was sitting on their lap and I have brought Fiona to many of my team calls and we even had calls where we purposely kind of designate them as calls where we are bringing our pets and everybody, the tone of the call or the meeting just changes because it opens up with everybody, giggling and cooing and eyeing and oh so cute and so.

Mark Cushing: Well that is very powerful, and it's now increasingly common. I think the subject of pets in the workplace as well as the impact post COVID of remote working at home to be with your pet, it's the most significant, not issue but kind of new trend wave surging through the pet world. Because it plays on both ends. If I am going to come back to the company that changed that policy and at least once a week or maybe every day if I want to bring my dog, I can bring my dog. If you really want me to work for you, I am not coming in five days, I am spending at least three days at home with my dog, and my cat, depending.

Jen Fisher: Cats don't always want us or want us around as much as dogs, right?

Mark Cushing: Well, there is a great phrase, dogs have owners, and cats have staff. And it's so true. But you know, ten years ago, even certainly 20 years ago, this conversation in the last two minutes would have seemed absurd to people. What do you mean bring your dog to work? What do you mean, you're going to stay home?

Jen Fisher: Right.

Mark Cushing: You can hang out with your dog. Just put him in a crate or put him in the backyard and you will see him at 6:00 o'clock, that's over. I mean millennials aren't going to do that, they are just not interested. The interesting and I think we will get to this. There was a seminal study done, they were in the field in 2016, maybe 2017, so it was current by Kerry O'Hara, PhD, from UCLA, who at the time was with the nationwide pet insurance. She now is a partner of mine in APG O'Hara Research Analytics. So we worked together often and she did this study and it was 1,500 employees of companies of 100 employers or more. A 1,000 of the 1,500 own pets and 500 didn't. And it was a comprehensive study, very small margin of error and it was staggering in two respects. How much more all the employees felt better about their company, like their boss better, like their co-employees better, everything about it. Wanted to stay longer would turn down other jobs if the company was pet friendly and there was virtually no distinction in the level of that enthusiasm between pet owning employees and those that didn't. So even employees that didn't have dogs, like their company better. If they had a pet friendly policy, it was a range of pet friendly policies, not just having dogs in the building, but it opened the eyes of a lot of people, and I think more than any other study that has been done in the industry. This one just flip things on their head and people thought, "Yeah, that is how I feel, but I assumed nobody else did," and so that is where we are now.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, I mean it is interesting, just another kind of little tidbit at Deloitte. One of our benefits that we offer to our people is pet insurance and it is one of our most popular benefits, so things like that, like you said, I mean that that would have been unheard of or people would have thought you were nuts to even offer that or bring that up several years ago.

Mark Cushing: Well, it is true, and one of the benefits alongside that has been of telemedicine free calls to get advice. We just got a puppy. It's doing this, what should we do or not to? And very popular. Pet insurance is an interesting topic on its own. Just five years ago, we were just barely above 1% of pet owners with pet insurance and even today, it's only at 4%. Now that is quadruple growth if you look at it that way, right? You are at Deloitte, you could, there's ways to look at numbers. So you look at that number and go, "That is dramatic and dynamic growth," which it is. But it's still only 4%, but that number is going to double and then it's going to double, and it's going to double again soon. You can just see millennials going, "You know what? Bad things can happen to pets, injuries, you know illnesses, chronic conditions," and you need to be prepared for it, and they want the same level of health care for their pets as themselves.

Jen Fisher: And yeah, I mean they're like kids. (laughs)

Mark Cushing: Yeah, I am not surprised that the pet insurance is popular with Deloitte employees.

Jen Fisher: So you had mentioned before the human-animal bond and you talk about this a lot in your book, so can you explain more about that? Maybe the evolution of that. How it all came about and what the research says.

Mark Cushing: Great question, so if you go back to the 1970s, a small group of behavioral psychologists and veterinarians who probably could have met in a phone booth, got together and began to look at studies that have been isolated and in many cases dismissed, as you kind of folk wisdom like your grandmother soup remedy for the flu or something? I mean it was like yeah, we know we feel better

around pets, but let's not make a science out of it. Let's not claim too much. So research began, as is always the pattern. And then, two, five, 10, a 100 academicians get involved. And between the 70s and 90s, the phrase itself, human-animal bond was created and you began to see what is now at the Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine's library has 32,000 entries related to the human-animal bond. Of those, around 32,000 separate peer reviewed research studies, I don't want to make that claim, but that's how many entries one library has on the subject.

So there are scores of ongoing research projects today and going back 10, 15 years. And they are really looking at every aspect of people either in troublesome situations or just their daily life with the impact or presence of pets, usually dogs, but not limited the dogs, means soldiers back from Afghanistan and Iraq with PTSD dramatic improvement at a faster rate if a dog is involved in their therapy, big time! Teenage girls that have been victims sadly of some form of sexual abuse, therapy involving dogs or horses, just that relationship playing a critical role in the recovery emotionally, and seniors that are in nursing homes not eating adequately, and that is a chronic issue. You have people losing weight and not able to sustain themselves, the mere presence of an aquarium and watching how fish eat on a regular basis, has had a measurable impact on them eating regularly themselves, right? And then you go to children in school, sociability, paying attention, kindness towards their classmates, study after study now presence of a pet that makes a measurable significant impact and there is a long, long list. I mean it is an exciting field of study because there are so many aspects that haven't been looked at yet. So, there is a science to this. It's by no means just kind of a good, happy feel feeling.

Jen Fisher: When did pets become pets? Like when did you know animals or dogs become domesticated and how did that all come about?

Mark Cushing: It all depends and full disclosure to your audience. At Stanford, I majored in Medieval and Renaissance history, which it is actually relevant. So with dogs, dogs were companions, and so there was always an element of enjoying the companionship with your dog. But when people were hunters right and farmers, dogs were working animals and they were, I am sure good companions. I don't want to make them sound like they were just factory units, they were workers though primarily. Cats, basically, unless you were a king or queen or Karl Lagerfeld, or Egyptian, you know, prince, cats were very much limited to the elite. And they weren't pets in any broad sense. Now let's go, let's move up to late 1700s, early 1800, alright, dog situations about the same, cats got into the United States on ships coming from Europe. And they had one job, they were sanitary workers. Their job was to catch and kill mice and rats, on the boat, on the ship, so that the food and probably the liquor too, but the food of the crew wasn't consumed by rats and mice. Then for about 50 years in the eastern seaboard cities, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, Chicago heading into the Midwest, cats were the primary sanitary workers for cities to do what to get rid of rats and mice on the street and in homes and in factories and restaurants and things like that.

Then one day, they all got fired, and worse than getting fired, as public health came into play, they were euthanized at the millions level, cats went from, "Bless those little cats for killing all the mice and rats and keeping us healthy," to, "We have got people who do that now," so they were killed, literally by the millions. And they are the comeback kids, because now it's roughly the same number of cats, about 90 million pet cats and 90 million or so pet dogs in America and they completely transformed and there was slower, cats were outside, they want to be independent anyway, but they began to enjoy sleeping inside, who wouldn't, food inside that's nice. An extra bowl of milk or something and it was more

gradual in these 40s, 50s, 60s. And then it just accelerated like everything with pets, 80s, 90s, and 2000s. So even in COVID now, you will go to shelters which have always had too many cats. And those shelters now that don't have a shortage, but there is a lot fewer. And I think people discover that cats are wonderful company and you can go away for a weekend, right? They require less care, because they want less care.

Jen Fisher: Yeah.

Mark Cushing: A cat, it's like feed me, now stop. Pet me, now stop petting me. OK, come over here, now go over there.

Jen Fisher: On my terms.

Mark Cushing: Everything is on their terms and they are pretty self-sufficient. You know dogs are, "What do you want to do? I'll do it, whatever you want, but do it right now," and let us keep doing it for the next 8 hours and cats are so different and that we talk about dogs and cats. There are significant number of other pets I do a chapter in my book on what I think I call it other pets. And those are meaningful, they have serious beneficial value and enjoyment for people. But there is not as many as there are cats and dogs.

Jen Fisher: And what is your, the emotional support, animal kind of debate. What is your stance? I live in Miami, and Miami International Airport is kind of famous for the emotional support peacock that somebody wanted to take on an airplane once. What is your, I mean, obviously there's huge emotional benefits to any type of animal I would think. But this big debate that is going on around.

Mark Cushing: That debates not going away and it's funny. Before you said where you lived. I mean, I was immediately thinking of that because it has been the subject of legislation and editorials and homeowners associations and all the above. So here is where it is. You have the service dogs that in a different category.

Jen Fisher: Right.

Mark Cushing: There is not a standard certification involved and people, it began originally with dogs for the blind and has expanded of course. Emotional support animals, there is not a recognized standard and process. And because there is no standards, we are going to debate this forever. Right, because it's your personal opinion, and I keep waiting for when a lot of people are going to rise up and say this group of dogs mainly, but animals deserves a better status and process and treatment and standards. And it doesn't seem to get there yet. So, if we did this podcast in 10 years, my guess it will still be a debate. It doesn't seem to be getting resolved.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, ok well interesting and unfortunate. I want it to get resolved.

Mark Cushing: We take our dog with us, not we just pay to have our dog go with us, we have to train him to be, and my wife would be strong and happy without him, but he clearly calms her on a flight, it's more enjoyable, all these things. So, I don't dispute that they play that role but until you get standards, and you have a process, everyone is going to have one silly example for every good example, right. Crocodile and Pittsburgh versus the... Now you've got a Jack Russell, both those are amazing dogs, wow.

Jen Fisher: Fair, yeah, and she's our second one, so we had another one previously Jake and yeah, we had to put him to sleep. He had cancer and I think that was the single hardest day of my life, but then I wanted another Jack Russell right away and my husband was like, "No, I need some time, I need some time," but I think I tortured him enough to where he was like, "Ok fine, we can get another dog."

Mark Cushing: Everybody is different about that. I'm of the camp. We lost two cats this year and we now have three beagles and we talked, my wife Natalie and I and it didn't make sense for her that she enjoyed cats her entire life. It didn't make sense to say, well, let's wait a year, it was just a year of your life, you're going to go without the benefit of a pet or type of pets that you enjoy so much.

Now I have one good Jack Russell story. Very dear friend, lives in San Antonio, involved in animal welfare, very smart, very powerful person, and she's a big Jack Russell commissure. We were talking about coyotes because the desert where I live and then Texas, you know coyotes, they're part of everybody's life in America now, but a coyote attacked another dog, I don't know if it was a part of her family, but a neighbor's dog, but it was about 100 yards away and her Jack Russell was on the porch. And so you probably know what I'm gonna tell you. He takes off, she goes running after him because she can hear the coyote and the fracas that he's involved in. And that Jack Russell ran and jumped on the back of that coyote to pull him off that other dog. Got hurt, the coyote wasn't without defenses, right and the coyote survived and whimpered away, and her Jack Russell survived, but I thought, "That's a serious dog," because I'm sure he spotted about 20 pounds at least or maybe 30 pounds to the coyote.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, they are amazing dogs and unfortunately, I think sometimes they get a bad rap because they're high energy. Just like, I mean any other dogs, right, you have to make sure you walk him enough and give him enough activity and make sure and it's funny because before we started recording the podcast, usually I escort Fiona out of the room, but since we were talking about pets, I decided to leave her in the room because if she barks or squeaks her toys, it's just appropriate for this podcast. It wouldn't be out of place, but she's been sleeping the whole time. Of course, the one podcast where I needed her to bark or squeak her toy, she's been asleep the entire time.

Mark Cushing: Say hi for me when she wakes up.

Jen Fisher: I will absolutely, so let me ask you do you have a favorite story about how a pet changed or improved someone's life?

Mark Cushing: Here's what I know, including recently with close-close friends and in some cases family where people passed away due to COVID. And it was always a premature death, right? It was not a death at the end of a long convalescence where you'd had time to process, right. I've had more people tell me in two cases I've observed it very close first hand that it was their dog, and in a couple cases cat, but it was their pet that just kind of didn't calm them down, didn't make them feel better, didn't make them stop grieving, right, it wasn't that role, they're not a drug you take and you don't feel any pain, but it was the pet that kind of brought them back to just a daily routine that brought some joy back into their lives and just allowed them to begin to process it and partly because pets don't live a long time. I always tell people pets, it's not just an investment financially, but pets is an emotional investment because they don't live a long time. 20 years for cats, possible but amazing. 12 years for a dog is a good run, right, 16 maybe I mean so you have to be prepared. We put two pets down this year, or one put down one sneaked out in the desert, that's not a healthy thing to do and never came back. Those aren't like fun stories, but I've seen the power as much as the friend's comforting words or your partner's

comforting words. Just having a dog in your lap having and that aspect just the physical joy of petting a dog or petting a cat and just having them rest next to you, it just kind of began to warm people back up. I hope that makes sense, but that's the first thing that comes to mind.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, I mean it makes a lot of sense. I think, especially with a dog, right, the dogs still has it, regardless of what's going on in the world or your life, and my husband and I talked a lot about this during the pandemic. I mean, Fiona has no idea that there's a global pandemic. She still needs to go for a walk. Regardless of whether or not we wanted to get out and do something, she was looking at us like alright people, "When are we going walking?"

Mark Cushing: Yeah, what did I do to make you mad at me.

Jen Fisher: Exactly so they kind of force you to get out and take care of them because you have to, and we've talked about that a lot. So, if you could say if there was one main thing or kind of a theme that you want people to take away from your book *Pet Nation*, what would that be?

Mark Cushing: Yeah, it would be this that pets in fact make your personal life better, they make you healthier and they build your network of friends and people you trust in the world. Period. And there's nothing else that quite does it so consistently as pets. And they'll do it every day. They're just steady. And if you don't have a pet, try one. And if you have one dog, you know what your dog would like a playmate. I guess I'm talking to you, too. I mean, if you don't be afraid to have that second dog and guess what dogs and cats are believed to not get along, but seriously, I would just tell people whatever you've heard from somebody about while a kitty litter boxes a pain, or feeding a dog and cat every day. You know what it's delivered to you, there's technology. Guess what, the world's figured out how to make it easy to have pets and particularly people that maybe their kids are gone, and they think that I can't take care of a pet anymore, I think the last 25 years of your life is maybe the time you need to pet the most. So don't be shy, give it a try. I think you'd be surprised, but by the way, be prepared to wait on a waiting list. Unfortunately, right now it's not easy to find a dog or particularly.

Jen Fisher: That pandemic has really kind of impacted that, right? It's just the availability in the number of people.

Mark Cushing: We've had a shortage of dogs documented for at least the last seven years, but pandemic really spiked it. It kind of put it on steroids and so the prices have gone up. The availability has gone up. Many shelters you'll have listeners go, "Oh my God, our shelters are still full," but most aren't. And in most metro shelters, the adoptable dogs are out the door before the weekend starts. You can't show up on a Saturday and say hey we were thinking about adopting a dog, what do you have for me, and most will say we don't have anything. I work on that. There's two great shortages, right now affecting pets. One is the shortage of dogs and the second is shortages of veterinarians. And those are acute problems, and they have to get addressed. And that's a lot of what I this morning or early this afternoon before we are on this call. That's what I've spent my day working on, because those are tough to solve, but yeah, you got to start somewhere.

Jen Fisher: Yeah, absolutely. And what you said about kind of the theme or the takeaway, what you get in return is so much more than what you give, you can't put a price tag on that really.

Mark Cushing: Well, it's a great session. Just a bit of fun conversation. And you know what, my cats of course chose to hang out with my wife in her office and so they not her to meow for me, or my Papillon

to bark. I think they have a sense as what I do for a living because they see pictures around me and think, don't know why he's got all those other dogs and cats in his life.

Jen Fisher: They're much smarter than we give them credit for sometimes.

Mark Cushing: You know what, one of our beagles, did this three weeks ago, three days in a row. And then the little one, the four month old son. They turn on my light above my bed when they're hungry in the morning at 5:30, I kid you not. I woke up and thought, "What is this light doing on," I turned to my wife and said, Natalie, she's like she pointed behind me and I looked up and there was Vera. They have done this three days in a row, I couldn't read man, I was like almost crying laughing so hard, I couldn't believe it. And then little Jimmy Choo figured it out. So if she doesn't do it, he hops up because he loves to eat and he popped the light on. Not my favorite thing, but all I can do is applaud them and say how smart you guys, yeah?

Jen Fisher: You can't get mad absolutely. Well Mark, like you said this was a great conversation. Just so much goodness in in this conversation, I was smiling the whole time even talking about pets. It makes us feel better, so thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your wisdom.

Mark Cushing: Thanks a lot, good luck with Fiona and have a great rest of the year.

Jen Fisher: I'm so grateful Mark could be with us today to talk about our love for pets. Thank you to our producers, Revit 360 and our listeners. You can find the WorkWell podcast series on Deloitte.com or you can visit various pod catchers using the keyword "WorkWell," all one word, to hear more and if you like the show don't forget to subscribe so you get all of our future episodes. If you have a topic you'd like to hear on the WorkWell podcast series or maybe a story you would like to share, please reach out to me on LinkedIn. My profile is under the name Jen Fisher, or on Twitter at JenFish23. We're always open to your recommendations and feedback. And of course if you like what you hear, please share, post, and like this podcast. Thank you and be well.