



### Three startup leaders explain why they chose Wisconsin

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For Comply365's Kerry Frank, it was a call from Gov. Scott Walker. Understory's Alex Kubicek saw a chance to help develop Madison's growing startup ecosystem. And Bright Cellars' Richard Yau and his co-founder decided to stick around after finishing the gener8tor program.

But the three startup leaders, featured yesterday at the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs Conference in Madison, say they're all committed to growing their companies in the state.

"We're really excited and looking forward to how we can grow," Kubicek said.

Kubicek, a UW-Madison grad, [moved Understory back to Madison weeks ago](#) after developing it with his team in Boston.

The company's hardware tracks weather events to provide better data for companies, and it's returned after closing a \$7.5 million fundraising round that included Monsanto's venture capital arm. The lead investor, Wisconsin fund 4490 Ventures, had asked Kubicek whether they'd be willing to come back to Madison.

The move sparked some skepticism from Kubicek's network in Boston, which warned he might not find enough talent here. But Kubicek said that hasn't been the case, noting he just hired four more Wisconsinites last week.

"We've found the exact opposite," he said. "We're finding really incredible people."

Yau also spent time in the Boston area, launching Bright Cellars after graduating from MIT. The company [looks to be a "Pandora of wine,"](#) with its algorithm matching wine drinkers to new bottles they might like.

Bright Cellars came to Wisconsin to participate in gener8tor's program, and as the company hired its first employees, it realized half of its team was suddenly from Wisconsin. At the time, the startup hub Ward4 was just opening up, and Yau said the team decided to take part in the "start of an entrepreneurial hub in Milwaukee."

The area, he said, seems to be lacking more entrepreneurs. But he said the company's flexible work schedules and environment has ensured they're able to attract employees who would "otherwise go to Facebook or Google."

And perhaps those employees might launch a startup of their own someday, he said.

"It's been great for us to be in the epicenter of startup activity," he said.

Frank and Comply365 [didn't have as far of a journey](#), moving to Beloit from Roscoe, Ill. in 2012. At the time, the facility where Frank leased space was being sold, and she had "six weeks to figure out" where to move.

Walker got wind of the news, Frank said, and he personally called her to get her to move across the border. Comply365, which was featured in his next State of the State address, got \$150,000 in tax credits and has surpassed the 35 jobs it was required to add under the deal.

“It was really good to feel wanted and welcome,” Frank said. “There were some tax incentives, but that didn’t sway me. It was really, ‘Wow. Someone cares.’”

Comply365, which got its start by streamlining processes in the airline industry, now works out of the Irontek building in downtown Beloit, along with a handful of other tech companies. Frank said they’re hoping to tap into the trend of more coders leaving Silicon Valley than joining it, as people move to places like the Midwest for a more comfortable lifestyle.

But the challenge, she said, is making sure people know there’s a “super high-tech company right in Beloit, Wisconsin.”

“We’ve been very fortunate finding rockstar talent,” Frank said. “It just takes a lot of legwork, a lot of marketing on our end, to help people understand what’s available here in the state.”

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