

Orlando startup faces off with high-profile investor on podcast; new guided-tour city app launches

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An Orlando entrepreneur impressed a high-profile startup backer on the experienced investor's podcast recently, although the host wasn't exactly excited that she was from Orlando.

Kristen Wiley, whose [company](#) Statusphere connects companies with people who have substantial social-media followings, appeared on This Week in Startups.

The podcast is hosted by Jason Calacanis, an [internet entrepreneur](#) who in 2003 created the popular blogging platform Weblogs, supported by Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban. Weblogs sold to America Online in October 2005 for more than \$25 million.

Calcanis admitted that Statusphere was something he would not want to lead but said Wiley's energy during her quick pitch convinced him that she would see it through whether it makes a profit or not.

"We are looking for people who are high-energy and passionate about what they are doing," he said. "It's clear you love it."

During the pitch, Wiley said the company is looking for \$1 million in capital and that it had received more than 2,000 applications from people hoping to become influencers. Last year, Statusphere made \$70,000 in revenue.

The company, which is in the fast-growing industry of so-called influencer marketing, has also landed 18 paying brands, which include companies in the skin care, food, and technology industries.

Still, Calacanis said her location in Orlando would hinder her company's growth.

"Get the hell out of Orlando," he said. "This is life advice and it's founder advice. If you are in Florida, you get put into a bucket of scam businesses in Florida."

Wiley pushed back, pointing at the cost of living differences in Central Florida compared to Silicon Valley or New York.

Since she started trying to sell her company last year, Wiley said, her pitch experience has been eye-opening.

"It's strange (to pitch) because they want you to have this big ego while simultaneously trying to crush your ego," she said. "It's a weird concept."

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ENTREPRENEUR LAUNCHES TOUR-GUIDE APP

Heading to a new city for the first time and looking for someone to walk you around town? There could soon be a locally built app for that.

A Kissimmee entrepreneur has been working on a way for travelers to connect with locals at their destinations to take in the sights with people who live there.

The Catt City app landed in the Apple App Store about two months ago.

Founder Lizia Santos says 250 users have signed up to be hosts despite very little marketing.

Santos is a first-time [entrepreneur](#) who was looking for a way to earn money as a work-at-home mother.

City Catt bills itself as a way for [people](#) to work flexible hours by signing up for the service and being a tour guide at their leisure.

Customers, meanwhile, input where they hope to visit and activities they might be interested in.

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