



Yik Yak, the Hyperlocal Gossip App, Raises \$10M and Unsettling Questions

Will the old high school rumor mill start spinning out of control?

Yik Yak allows users to anonymously post messages to a local "bulletin board," which is visible to anyone within a 1.5 mile radius of the sender. Its co-founders, Brooks Buffington and Tyler Droll, launched the app 7 months ago, shortly after they had graduated from South Carolina's Furman University. Since then, the app has rapidly expanded its herd of "yakkers," logging users in 250 college campuses, up from 100 campuses in April, the Wall Street Journal reports.

Anonymity encourages users to air refreshingly frank confessions that they might hesitate to post to Twitter or Facebook. "I am so obscenely overpaid, I actually almost feel bad," wrote one yakker within 1.5 miles of TIME's midtown headquarters.

But the app has also sent rumor mills spinning dangerously out of control. One Connecticut high school temporarily suspended classes as Yik Yak's local message board was flooded with venomous posts. "Nobody is taking H. to prom because nobody has a forklift," read one such message, according to a student's personal account in New York Magazine. Two schools in Chicago have sent letters urging parents to stop their children from downloading the app.

Yik Yak's founders have acknowledged the concerns, offering to block the app from high school campuses using geo-fencing technology. "We're proactively trying to keep high schoolers off the app," co-founder Droll told Fox News. They have also added an age warning to the app, advising users age 16 and below to stick to the old-fashioned methods of spreading gossip.

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