

Annie Vellon

Undergraduate-Business Information & Analytics, Marketing and Economics

[annie.vellon@gmail.com](mailto:annie.vellon@gmail.com)

Flipboard Magazines: <https://flipboard.com/@AnnieVellon>

Session: An Honest Conversation with YikYak

## **YikYak: Community Oriented Platform or Cyber Bullying Hub**

### **Abstract:**

Before this conversation, I had a pretty negative opinion of YikYak. I'd only seen it as tool for cyber bullying, and wasn't really understanding why it had been named one of the most promising startups of 2014. But after hearing the two founders, Brooks Buffington and Tyler Droll, talk about it's ability to instantly connect users to a community, I'm more convinced of it's potential and what all of the hypes about.

### **Session:**

Every community wants to be connected, no matter who they are. And social media platforms like Twitter have made great strides in connecting communities all over and sparking all sorts of new conversations. However, if you want your voice to be heard on Twitter and essentially any other social media site, you need a following, and I think we can all agree that it can take a while to get a relevant, devoted following.

The founders of YikYak wanted to take that time element out of gaining a social media following so users could skip the entire username/profile/followers process and instantly be connected to the people around them. This kind of instant connection has revolutionized the way users can communicate with one another; it's not so much focused on trying to build your personal brand as it is about having legitimate, raw conversations with community members around you.

Due to the "no username, no profile" nature of the platform, YikYak is

completely anonymous. The motto is “location first, anonymous second”, meaning the purpose of YikYak is really the instant connections based on location, and the anonymous aspect is really just a side product of the way YikYak operates. However, this has been the area where YikYak has run into the most problems. As one can imagine, people are a lot bolder in what they say when their identity is hidden and this can often lead to cyber bullying and harassment. YikYak has started dealing with this head on by getting the latitudes and longitudes of different middle schools and high schools around the country and geofencing them out of the app. This obviously won’t solve the problem completely, but it’s a step in the right direction. Additionally, YikYak announced that they’ll be coming out with the option for usernames in the near future. This won’t be required, and there won’t be profiles with followers, but this option should help YikYak track where some of the abusive yaks are coming from.

Despite the cyber bullying aspect of the app, the founders have heard of some pretty great stories that stemmed from using YikYak. It’s doesn’t only live in the digital, YikYak can effect people in the real world! YikYak is a staple on most college campuses, and as a student was on his way to class, his car broke down. He explained what happened on YikYak and a complete stranger came to help him fix his car. That’s amazing! Even more amazing is that YikYak was able to alert students of a shooter in the FSU library, and this was the top Yak on YikYak 15 minutes before their campus safety sent out a text alert to the student body. Who knows how many lives that saved?!

The founders also commented on all of the political talk they’ve been seeing with the upcoming election right around the corner. Of course these Yaks tend to get a little heated, but it’s still prompting intelligent conversation amongst peers. When they looked

at the analytics after the republican debate, 15% of the yaks were about the debate! This is great news, since YikYak is mostly used on college campuses, which means millennials are actually starting to get engaged in the election!

**Conclusion:**

YikYak is a great social media platform that levels the playing field for all of its users. It gives anyone who Yaks a voice in their community (whether they deserve it or not...) and connects people that otherwise wouldn't have connected. Millennials crave fast and easy technology with a short onboarding process since our attentions spans are now less than a Goldfish's. And with the instant community aspect YikYak does just that!

YikYak also has a blog on their website that breaks down who's saying what and where, and also shows you what's trending. There's some pretty interesting information, definitely recommend taking a look.