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## TECHNOLOGY

# French social media app Yubo sets up U.S. headquarters in Jacksonville 🔑

By Timothy Gibbons  
Editor in chief, Jacksonville Business Journal  
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With the help of two Jacksonville natives, French social media app Yubo is setting up its U.S. office on the First Coast, with a handful of people expected to be hired by the company.

The office will be run by Alexander Boyd and Katie Boyd, a brother-sister team who previously worked in user safety and moderation roles for Chatous, a California company behind both an eponymous random chat app and a social Q-and-A app called Kiwi.

About two and a half years ago, the Boyds were hired by Yubo to build out the company's safety and support departments.

"We really think it's the next evolution of social media, more geared to real social interactions and not so much focused on content creation," Alexander Boyd told the Business Journal.

Yubo is designed for teenagers — those saying they are 13 to 18-year-olds are segregated from those saying they are older — with a focus on live streaming in a group of up to 10 users.

The app has been criticized for setting up a situation in which younger users could be preyed upon; the company has responded by implementing algorithms that shut down streams when it detects nudity and face analyzing software to determine age, among other steps.

From Jacksonville, the Boyds will oversee the company's safety and support team as well as the local office.

In the short to mid-term, Alexander Boyd said, the office, based in Mandarin, is looking to hire about 10 people, primarily in safety support roles as well as marketing and communications.

“Jacksonville just made the most sense with Florida being close Latin America; we felt that was a good opportunity in that way,” he said. “Being familiar with the local community, we thought that would help recruitment, as well.”

The company is also looking to have the team grow its U.S. and Latin American user base, part of what it says are 35 million users around the world. According to the company, American users in Yubo live streams have gone up 350% in the past six months and Latin American participation grew 1,200%.

According to TechCrunch, Yubo users have sent each other 10 billion messages and started 30 million live video streams in the past five years.

“Millions of young people in the U.S. and Latin America socialize together on Yubo every month, so we are thrilled to open an office and team in Jacksonville,” said Yubo CEO and co-founder Sacha Lazimi said in a statement. “During these socially distanced times, online social spaces are more important than ever. We’re committed to supporting our online community across the Americas and our local community here in Jacksonville.”

In December, Yubo raised \$12.3 million in a funding round led by Iris Capital and Idinvest Partners, with existing investors Alven, Sweet Capital and Village Global also participating.

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