

TikTok inks music deal as it sets up shop in California

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The social media video sharing app TikTok is opening a new office in California to help boost its ambitions in the United States, where it faces skepticism about its ties to China

TikTok on Thursday licensed a catalogue of independent music as it worked to build on the momentum of the social networking app specializing in video snippets.

The deal between TikTok and Merlin, a digital rights agency for independent music labels, is designed to help facilitate the use of the short-form video service for promotions.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Merlin chief executive Jeremy Sirota said: "Merlin members are increasingly using TikTok for their [marketing campaigns](#), and today's partnership ensures that they and their artists can also build new and incremental revenue streams."

London-based Merlin said its roster of members spans more than 60 countries and includes tens of thousands of independent record labels, distributors and artist management companies.

The news came as TikTok opened an office in Los Angeles to advance its ambitions in the US.

"Located between the innovative tech companies in Silicon Beach and the streaming content companies at Hayden tract (in Los Angeles), TikTok truly sits at the intersection of technology and entertainment, physically and figuratively," TikTok US general manager Vanessa Pappas said.

"While we are a global [company](#), having a permanent office in LA speaks to our commitment to the US market and deepens our bonds with the city, and the talent and companies, that call it home."

TikTok, launched by Chinese company ByteDance in September 2017, has quickly become one of the most popular social networks in the world, with young people its main market.

In November, the app hit 1.5 billion downloads worldwide, outperforming Instagram.

Users typically post short clips of themselves performing skits, lip-syncing and dancing.

But TikTok has come under scrutiny recently over whether it censors content deemed sensitive by China's authoritarian rulers.

TikTok said in a statement in October its operations were not influenced by the Chinese government.

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