

Clubhouse and the Rise of Audio-Social Media





Many have claimed that all social networks are starting to look the same.

It has become obvious they are all developing the same feature set. Platforms copied Snapchat and created Stories, and now they are all copying TikTok. One of the newer TikTok clones, [Clash, just bought Byte](#) — which was built by the team that started the whole tiny video craze in the first place (Vine). Copying has its place, for sure. But the newest community-focused platform, Clubhouse, is finding early success by doing something completely different.

It's hard to clone a huge incumbent with success — and even harder to build something brand new. But if you can break through the upside is much bigger. In less than a year Clubhouse has become a social media darling with the promise of creating community and connection with a new audio-first experience.

The Rise of Audio-Social

Aural storytelling and audio media has always been part of our lives, but text and image-based content have ruled media for decades. Now we're seeing a resurgence in audio content, driven by the ubiquity of [smartphones and hands-free devices](#), as well as the desire for an alternative to looking at a screen.

One contributing factor to the rising prominence of audio media is the increasing popularity of podcasts. Podcasts have been around for a long time, but were largely the domain of traditional talk radio. However, their popularity has really skyrocketed since 2018 — shortly after being added to digital radio apps Spotify and Pandora.

While podcasts were gaining prominence, audio also began to go social. In 2018, Facebook added [voice notes to WhatsApp](#) and Messenger. In 2019, the voice messaging app Yac launched with the promise to eliminate meetings. 2020 saw the launch of a host of other audio-first social media apps including Discord, RiffR, Wavve, Spoon, and Stereo. By the end of the year, even dating was going audio with apps like Bumble and Happn adding voice notes, and the launch of String, an audio-first dating platform.

Now there appears to be an arms race to see which of these new audio-social platforms will reign supreme, with Clubhouse as the rising star of the aural renaissance. Clubhouse as the rising star of the aural renaissance. As of March 2021, Clubhouse has 10 million downloads globally, with 2 million weekly active users including celebrities and influential early adopters across industries. The app has raised \$100m at a [\\$1 billion valuation](#).

As expected, companies like Twitter and Facebook are already building audio-chat products to rival Clubhouse.



Eric Dahan
CEO, Open Influence

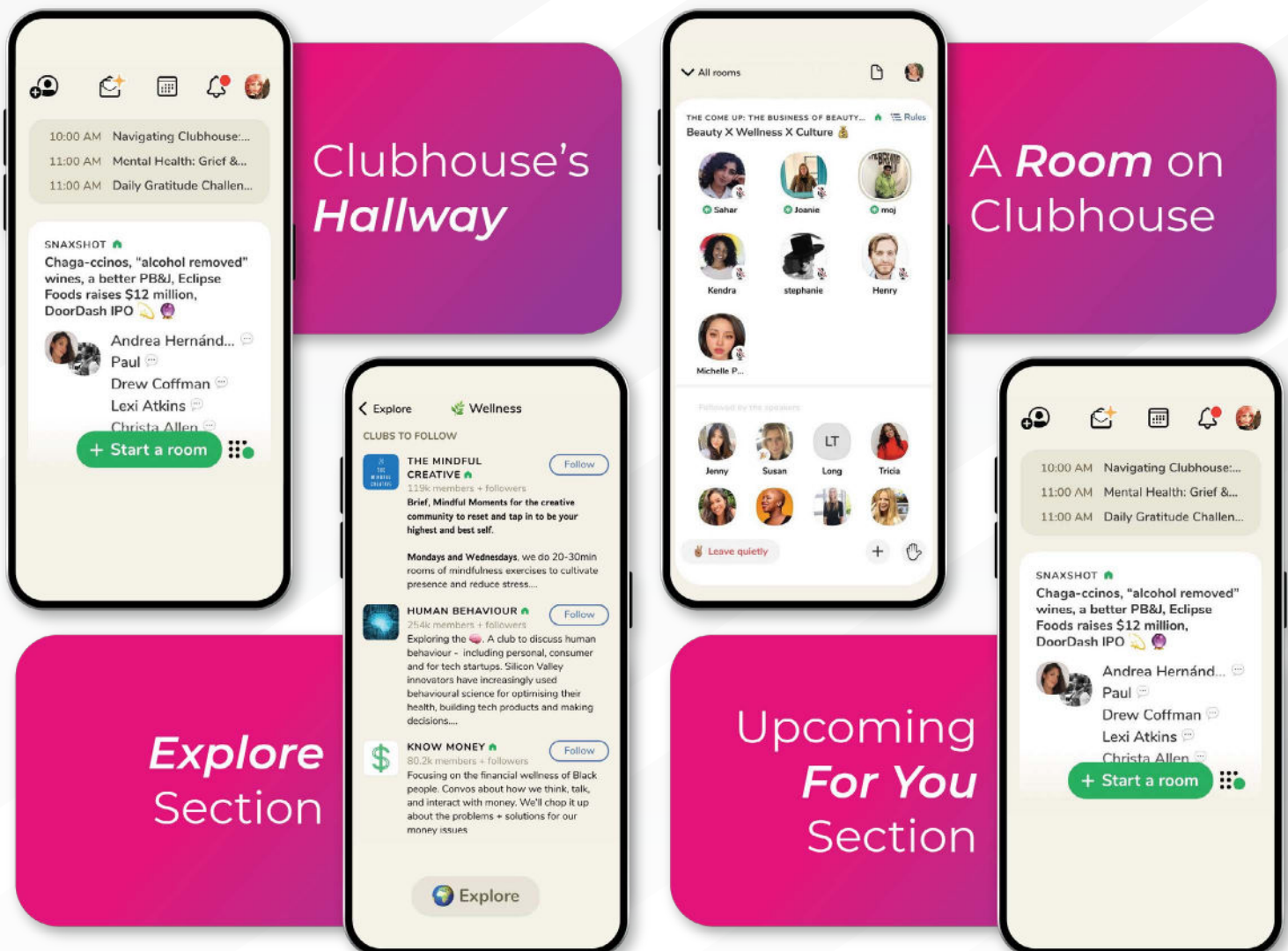
“Spotify and Pandora have really made audio content more accessible. Over the last few years, podcasting has been taking off in a meaningful way. Now it seems like everyone has a podcast.”

What is Clubhouse?

Clubhouse is an invite-only live audio app that allows people to listen and participate in conversations in real time. There's no private messaging and no written content. There's no archive and nothing is recorded. Clubhouse is all about creating an ephemeral voice and aural experience.

Users can enter a "room" and listen to an active conversation. You enter a room as an audience member, but if you want to talk, you can just raise your hand and possibly be called on to speak. There's also the option to create your own room, make it private and only invite your friends.

The real game-changer for Clubhouse is being able to close the app and still listen to or participate in discussion. Most of us like to bounce between apps, filling the silence with digital noise. When we want to kill free time we go to platforms like Instagram or TikTok where short-video is king. When we want to find company while driving, cooking, folding laundry and so on, we turn to our favorite Podcasts.





Open Influence CEO Eric Dahan says audio-social apps like Clubhouse are a natural evolution in audio media, addressing a market need for a more interactive version of a podcast.

“Podcasting is a one-to-one experience where there’s a host and a guest. It’s not in real time and it’s not interactive or social. Clubhouse is asking how they can take what’s working in podcasts and make it more social.”

Unlike other social media apps, Clubhouse doesn’t demand your undivided attention. Instead, it answers the desire to create real human connection on social media, while freeing us from the distractions of the same.



“Studies say we pick up our phones around 58 times a day. No surprise there. Right? Most of us like to fill the silence with digital noise. We bounce around between apps that offer different experiences. When we want to kill free time we go to platforms like Instagram or TikTok where short-video is king. When we want to find company while driving, cooking, folding laundry and so on, we turn to our favorite Podcasts or newer apps like Clubhouse.”

Maria A. Rodriguez

Comms and Marketing Director,
Open Influence

Caveats, Concerns, and Criticism

While Clubhouse has been well received, there have been some caveats and concerns. One concern is that it is deeply entangled with Silicon Valley elite, and is likely to mirror common problems in the tech and social media industry. Some are also raising the alarm about moderation — or the lack thereof — on the emerging platform.

These criticisms are certainly valid and Clubhouse seems to be taking them seriously. In addition to developing a plan for providing robust moderation tools, Clubhouse issued clear guidelines for community behavior. The company also took [a strong stance](#) against hate speech and abuse saying:

“[W]e unequivocally condemn Anti-Blackness, Anti-Semitism, and all other forms of racism, hate speech and abuse on Clubhouse.”

Clubhouse has also been a target in countries with strict data protection regulations. Critics have pointed that the booming app is not GDPR compliant. The concept behind the EU GDPR is simple: Businesses should not collect or process consumers' data without their consent.

**The real question then is:
How does GDPR affect marketing
on a social media platform?**

**The short answer:
It has an impact on efforts like paid
media advertising and reporting.**



With Clubhouse we are not there yet.

When it comes to apps used primarily for private communications, strict GDPR guidelines are generally not a requirement. Keep in mind that Clubhouse is still in its beta version. We should expect to see platform iterations that respond to its consumer's needs. How people utilize the app will ultimately dictate its evolution and therefore the platform rules and guidelines. There is a lot of room for improvement, but we predict big changes in regards to data protection and privacy as more people flood and utilize the app.

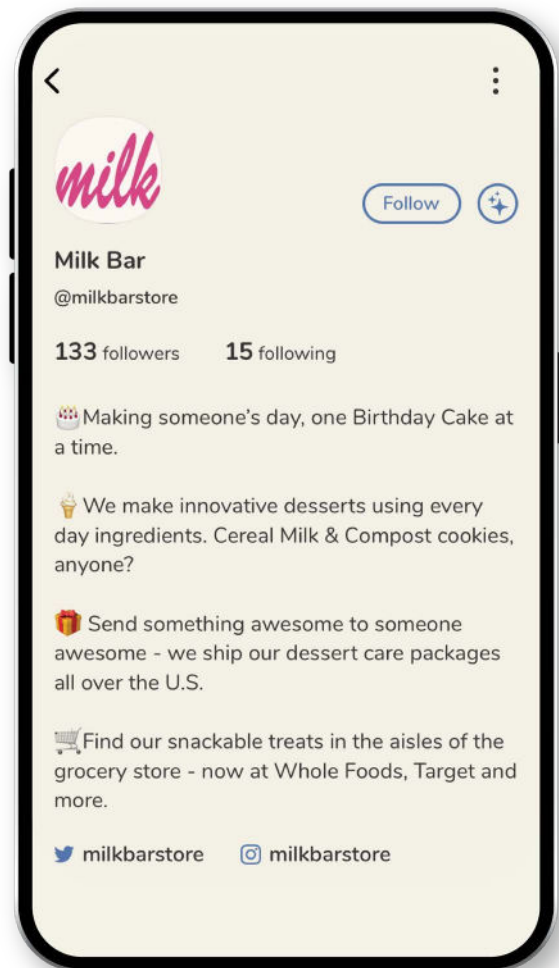
Despite the criticism, many believe Clubhouse is humanizing social media connections. The focus on voice allows users to hear and convey intonation, inflection, and emotion. It reasserts nuance that seems lacking in text and image-based social media interactions, which enables users to cultivate deeper empathy with each other.

And wherever there are influencers building new audiences, there are marketers finding new ways to connect with them!

Opportunities for Brand & Influencers in the Aural Economy

This innate desire for deeper human connection opens the door for infinite opportunities for marketers and creativity. If short-video is great to attract audiences and Podcasts are great to retain them, the question brands need to ask themselves is: How can we effectively and purposefully connect with consumers through these mediums when they're trying to fill those "empty moments?"

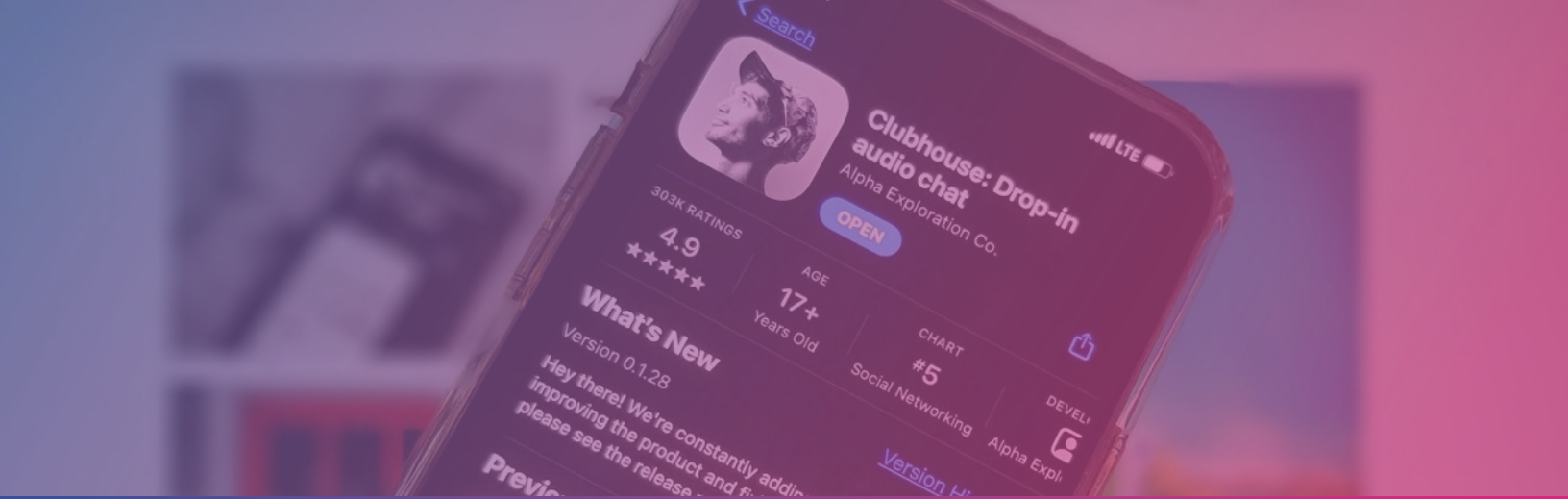
We anticipate Clubhouse becoming a platform for creating a fully immersive audio experience. From masterclasses and fundraisers, to improv shows and virtual summits, the possibilities are endless. Here are a few ideas for businesses and brands wondering how they can make meaningful connections with consumers on Clubhouse.



"Social media is currently a space filled with content that is filtered, edited, and often highly produced. But consumers are craving human connection now more than ever. They want to consume content that adds value to their lives instead of encouraging mindless scrolling. They want to participate and interact within their communities. Audio social media and apps like Clubhouse help provide that meaningful and authentic connection many of us seek."

Sierra Moore

Creative Director, Open Influence



Branded Clubs & Rooms

For brands looking to build a following and cultivate community on Clubhouse, there's the option to create their own rooms or clubs. The alternative is to partner with thought leaders on the app who have their own clubs with large followings to host a sponsored room.

Non-Profits & Fundraisers

Similar to how brands work with influencers, nonprofits can also partner with influencers to host rooms with live fundraisers and raise money for good causes.

Virtual Summits

Clubhouse could make a great addition to any virtual conference, but also seems tailor-made for hosting audio-only virtual events in real time. Rooms can be utilized for panels, fireside chats, workshops, Q&As, and even breakout sessions.

Real-Time Master Classes

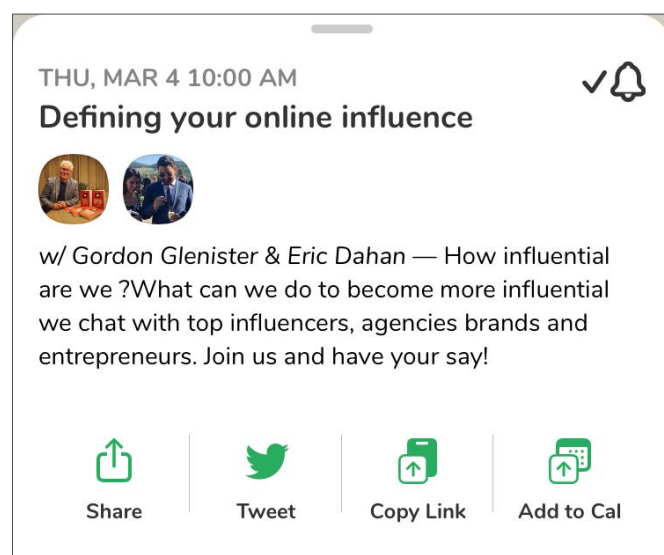
For things that don't require any visual components, a voice-only masterclass could be a great option. Experts on the platform are already doing this, using rooms to share their knowledge and essentially teach masterclasses in real-time.

Entertainment

As a social evolution of audio media, Clubhouse seems a natural fit for live streaming from DJs and musicians, stand-up comedy shows, storytime, and even live AMAs with popular celebrities. There's even the potential for open mic poetry sessions or live readings with book authors.

Wellness

Clubhouse is a great way to eliminate the visual distractions from the virtual mindfulness experience. Wellness pros and brands could schedule live meditations, breathwork classes, and even workshops or virtual retreats



How to Make the Most of Clubhouse

It's all well and good that opportunities abound on Clubhouse, but what's the best way to maximize your potential influence on this new platform?

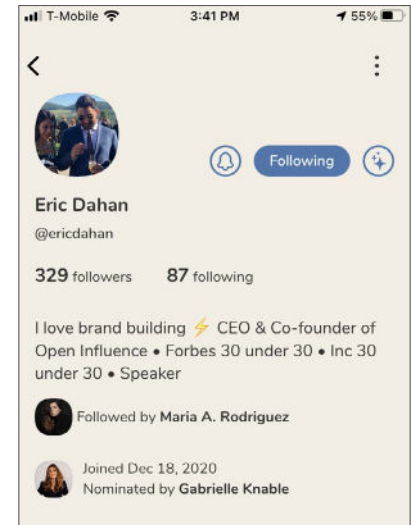
Here are a few things to keep in mind.

Get Your Bio Right

Clubhouse is all about the voice and the bio. The bio is an opportunity to sell yourself, your expertise, and generate leads. If you want to make the most out of Clubhouse, your bio needs to be on point. The first three lines are absolutely crucial and we recommend making your bio stand out by including:

Your superpower: What's your expertise and how will you provide value?

A Strong Call to Action: Invite profile visitors to connect with you on Facebook, Instagram, or whatever platform you prefer. Some people are even getting a second phone just for Clubhouse and inviting folks to connect via text.

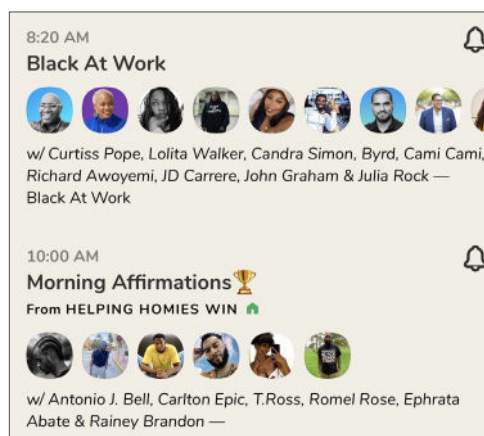


Bring Value to the Room

You might enter the room as a speaker, but building influence on Clubhouse is all about adding value. Raise your hand to speak when you have something of value to add, and if you're invited to the stage, moderators will encourage the audience to follow you. The more value you bring to the room, the more likely people are to follow you. This is how you grow your influence as a member of whatever Clubhouse communities you choose to be part of.

Be a Mindful Moderator

Speaking of moderators, it's important to be a good one if you plan to create your own rooms and clubs. And you have to moderate three consecutive rooms before you can create your own club. A good moderator sets the mood and has a huge influence over the flow of conversation. Make sure you're present, listening, and be prepared to guide participants back to the topic when they go astray.



Cultivate Collaborative Spaces

Clubhouse is all about bringing together different ideas and perspectives. Part of your job as the moderator is to create a safe space for diverse voices to be heard. It's great to invite high-profile people to speak; but try to balance it by offering people from underrepresented groups to contribute as well.



Clubhouse FAQs

New platforms come with big question marks. Read on to find answers to Clubhouse's most frequently asked questions.

Is there a chat or messaging feature on Clubhouse?

No, there isn't a direct messaging feature on Clubhouse - or at least not yet! However, you can invite someone from your network to a private room.

How are people making money from Clubhouse? Should I sell my Clubhouse invites?

We can't tell you how to use your invites, but whoever you send them out to will be connected to you. Not only will their profile show you as their nominator, but if they violate any community guidelines, your profile will be deleted along with theirs - use your invites wisely!

In the future, Clubhouse might have a [key creator fund](#) similar to platforms like Snapchat and TikTok, in which the app compensates top creators and conversation leaders. Clubhouse's [official blog](#) announced that features such as tipping, tickets or subscriptions are coming in the next couple of months. But for now, focusing on your connections is the best way to take advantage of the app.

How can I get more invites?

When you first join the app, you get one or two invites to send out to friends or coworkers. After that, the users that constantly engage with the platform are granted more invitations. Clubhouse wants invites to go to people that will actually help grow the app, so those who [nominate](#) great people tend to be rewarded.

Am I being recorded on Clubhouse?

All rooms on Clubhouse are live and only the person that started the room can record it. If you are worried about being recorded on Clubhouse, fear not. If a user tries to record a room, they risk being kicked off the app. It's against their community guidelines after all!

Everything is Going Social

With established players like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram dominating the social media landscape, many have come to believe there's no space for anything new. The success of Clubhouse and the rise of other audio-social platforms is proof that there is indeed still space for social media to evolve.

As we move into this next phase of social media, we'll start to see more businesses that [aren't inherently social becoming more so](#) in order to cultivate deeper connections with their customers.

“We can expect businesses to emerge where social doesn't seem like an obvious play, but it's something that people enjoy and want more of. Podcasting and this emergence of audio-social is one example. Keep an eye out for streaming to become more interactive, and be prepared for this trend of integrating social into everything to continue,” says Eric Dahan.

It's always exciting to connect with the community and explore the possibilities on these new platforms. If you'd like to connect with us feel free to drop us an email at social@openinfluence.com. *We'd love to hear from you!*

