

# You can't sit with us: How brands can edge their way into Clubhouse

*Much like places like Chiltern Firehouse, that feeling of exclusivity leaves most people curious to learn more. People want to see what all the fuss is about. Is it all that? Why can't I just get in?*

Temps de lecture : minute

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Clubhouse opted for an interesting invite-only based strategy. Some call it elitist, but the beauty of this is that they have been able to benefit from community-based growth (sorry, Android users).

## The Clubhouse community

As a young Brit who was born in Ukraine with West-African heritage, I've always been drawn to different cultures and people. Clubhouse has opened me up to exploring my identity further by being able to engage with people I didn't know were out there in such a unique way. The audio-based platform means that rather than connecting with people through the images and content on your profile feed, you connect with people through thoughts, ideas and ideologies.

It's truly fascinating to be able to connect with pockets of communities around the world through the medium of voice. It almost completely removes the awkwardness of forming connections IRL or even virtually. You can just jump into any conversation and connect with essentially complete strangers on a deep level.

*Clubhouse is like listening to a podcast, but one you can add your 2 pence into.*

One conversation that struck me was in an African francophone diaspora room, where a young man opened up about his relationship woes. As the room consoled him, Preach, from the famous Youtube duo *Aba & Preach*, dropped in and gave incredible advice. At the end, the young man thanked the group and said that he didn't feel comfortable sharing his grief with his friends and he felt immensely comforted by the warmth and love he felt from this group... A group of strangers.

These authentic interactions are what creating a community is about. So naturally, there is a fear that brands could ruin this.

Unlike other platforms, a key differentiator for brands on this social platform is that it's not about being opportunistic, but rather about sharing passion points with like-minded individuals. The integral value of Clubhouse is that it allows for genuine dialogue and it's not just a one-way communication medium; we have radio for that.

"People are surprisingly honest and vulnerable on the platform, and they also don't have PR whispering in their ears," said Swan Sit, a former digital head at Nike, Revlon and Estée Lauder. It provides intimacy and authenticity of the conversations with audiences you may not have access to.

## Intimacy in brand communication

Today's consumers want to listen and buy from brands they feel a connection with rather than those that try to force their way into their lives. The millennials and Gen Zs of today are inquisitive, with strong values and rich in culture. It's no longer good enough for brands to

merely offer good products or services: we want to know if 'you can sit with us'.

With today's rife cancel culture, people are ready to call out and eliminate 'problematic' brands. As a result, we want to truly understand brands to see if they align with our values before getting behind them. Clubhouse not only gives you closer access to your communities, but also enables you to build brand resonance.

Brands succeed when they break through in culture and deliver authentic content from real people. For brands that are ready to make the plunge, having a strategy focused on building community could be key.

A 2019 Spotify study found 62% of Gen Z-ers and millennials believe brands have the power to create communities based on common interests and passions.

Clubhouse offers brands an additional avenue to truly connect with their consumers and also build their communities. So, how can brands get involved without compromising the authenticity and USP of the platform? After all, people are there to speak to people, not brands.

Using your C-suite: With Clubhouse being community driven, people want to interact with people. Utilising your C-suite to represent your brand on key topics enables for an opportunity for authentic communication. This also allows you to bring an authoritative voice to your main topics. In fact, 70% of consumers feel more connected to brands with CEOs that are active on social media.

Embrace imperfection: No one wants to listen to a pre-rehearsed speech – they want the real deal. When Elon Musk did his debut Clubhouse room, we saw that he was human. It wasn't a perfectly prime performance, but rather a 'real' rambling conversation. This made it powerful.

Employee advocacy: Employees are a brand's strongest asset and oftentimes their power in communications is overlooked. Research finds that brand messages are shared 24x more frequently when employees post them. In fact, employee shared posts reach 561% further than posts by corporate social media profiles.

Leverage from influencers: Brands can share insider knowledge about campaigns or their positive efforts on environmental and political issues. Hosting spaces and getting influencers or speakers to talk about issues would also be a marketing opportunity. Clubhouse can be compared to the beginnings of blogs - at the start, honest opinions about products were not influenced by paid advertising.

Clubhouse is offering brands an avenue to develop their brand resonance. Consumers have higher expectations for brands in today's landscape, they want to truly have a connection with a brand to get behind it. In an era where people want increased transparency, this platform offers just that. Clubhouse enables brands to understand their consumers, but also forge stronger relationships with them if they use it correctly.

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