

Is Clubhouse yet another fad, or is it the new social app we need right now?¹

Aina Aliieva

We live in innovative times. As Project Managers and Agilists, it is our obligation to discover and implement new ways in which to collaborate and work.

Networking has played a significant role in my professional growth. Prior to 2020 and the implementation of social distancing measures, I had networked in person extensively. I volunteered with PMI, delivered in-person presentations and attended local public events to boost my presence. Social media was not something I prioritized.

During lockdown, that all changed. I attended professional events online, though my own participation became relegated largely to a passive listener rather than active participant. At first, it was difficult to network online since many were unfamiliar with the various platforms. My peers and I tried “breakout rooms,” which were short, one-on-one, online meetings which were limited to five minutes. Sometimes, it could be awkward when the two of us shared nothing in common, and at other times there were dead spaces when no one showed up to my room, leading to lengthy wait times until another breakout occurred.

Online interactions gradually improved with the advent of Miro/Mural boards, Kumospace and other platforms, which allowed for greater engagement, yet still felt artificial and inorganic.

By chance, I learned about a new app called Clubhouse. It is very new, but is experiencing explosive growth.

What is Clubhouse?

Clubhouse is a live audio app that allows people to either listen passively or to actively participate in live discussions in rooms, the vast majority of which are not recorded. When the room ends, that conversation is gone forever. That creates a uniqueness and scarcity to the conversation. If you're not there, you've missed out.

What differentiates Clubhouse is its mono-media approach. It is Audio Only. You will not see written transcripts of conversations, nor are written comments or private chat messages present. You just use your ears and voice.

As you enter a room, you are enveloped by the voices of active conversations. If you raise your hand, you may be called on stage to join in the discussion. Likewise, you can easily

¹ How to cite this article: Aliieva, A. (2021). Is Clubhouse yet another fad, or is it the new social app we need right now? Commentary, *PM World Journal*, Vol. X, Issue IV, April.

create your own rooms or clubs and lead a discussion with people with similar interests to you.

You can listen while you multi-task

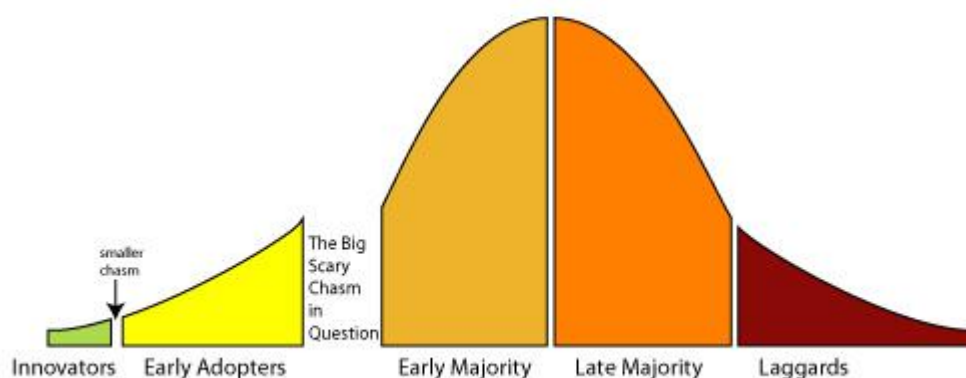
Like a podcast, Clubhouse's audio-only format allows you to work on other tasks while not missing anything that is said. If you're running out of good podcasts to listen to, Clubhouse can fill that vacuum very well.

When I first joined Clubhouse, I wanted to listen in on a room discussing Negotiation in Work and Life. The conversation grabbed my attention instantly, and I ended up listening for a full two hours! I ended up speaking with people from Los Angeles, Chicago and all over the world. For the first time since I began networking online, it felt natural. Moreover, I networked with people on a global level. This experience with Clubhouse inspired me. I went on to create my own Agile Club to meet with Agilists worldwide.

One of the issues that has dogged my presentations has been the logistics of answering all the questions that may arise from my audience. Time is usually finite and is not sufficient to answer everyone's questions before the majority of the audience begins to leave. Clubhouse has resolved this issue by allowing me to create separate Q&A rooms after my presentations, so that anyone interested in further discussion can do so.

Despite its advantages, Clubhouse is a new app, and is therefore subject to the Innovation Adoption Lifecycle and the Big Scary Chasm.

Geoffrey Moore's 'Crossing the Chasm' diagram
circa 1991



How Clubhouse could become relegated to 'a fad.'

1. Unfortunately, some Innovators and Early Adopters see Clubhouse as merely an opportunity to market their product while doing it extremely unprofessionally, which can be a big turn-off to newcomers. This has already been the case for a portion of the audience.

2. While it is exciting to spend a couple of hours per day talking to like-minded individuals, it can require a large investment in time. If the rooms are large, it may take significant time to be pulled on stage and participate with the discussion leaders, which can be discouraging.
3. Other applications such as Telegram or Twitter for instance, already have the option of adding a room into their existing app, so Clubhouse would be less attractive for those who already have many followers on Twitter or Telegram.

Why Clubhouse is a gamechanger and how it enhances our lives

1. Speed in networking, business connectivity and global knowledge flow.

If you are not a person that is comfortable with broad topics and large audiences, I recommend attending smaller, cozy rooms. These rooms often focus on specific topics, and allow you to get on stage quickly to collaborate with others.

The old norm was to exchange business cards, but the new standard of investigating a person's credentials and accomplishments is to view their LinkedIn or Twitter accounts. You can learn far more about that person using these tools than through a business card.

Clubhouse allows you to communicate with that person, as well as multiple like-minded people faster than ever before.

2. Seeking advice and learning new things.

At Clubhouse, you can potentially enter a room where the person speaking is someone famous and successful, such as Bill Gates or Tim Cook. You have the opportunity to ask them questions and learn directly from successful people.

3. Profile branding.

Rather than cold-calling and emailing resumes endlessly on job search sites, Clubhouse offers a fantastic opportunity to speak directly with potential recruiters onstage.

4. Data collection and ideas testing.

I am writing a book on productivity and looking for more data to increase its value to my readers. Rather than interviewing different people one at a time and asking them what topics they would find beneficial, I just hosted a one-hour room in Clubhouse with 20+ people and collected the data within an hour.

5. Passive Interaction

Since many of us are busy living disconnected lives in remote offices, the rise of passive interactions allows us to interact, yet only when we have the time to. I was able to join an

audio conference without registering, clicking a link without even asking to join. I could also drop out of the chat, so I was a passive listener, yet it is not merely a webinar. I could have chimed in and interacted had I desired to do so.

With apps such as Clubhouse that promote passive interaction, it feels like you have your hand on the pause button at all times. Zoom fatigue occurs when we are unable to hit pause, or at least feel dumb when we do.

6. The ability to build your community

Simply possessing a voice and ideas is enough to allow us to build a community of like-minded people by leveraging the power to create rooms and followings through Clubhouse. Other online communication platforms do not allow this level of leverage and ease of use, hence Clubhouse's primary advantage.

So, will the app progress to mass mainstream adoption? I'm not sure. But I am interested in observing what will happen next.

Want to chat at Clubhouse? Find me at username: Aina Alive

Need a Clubhouse invite? [Post on my LinkedIn](#), and I'll try to find you one.

About the Author



Aina Aliieva

Toronto, ON, Canada



Aina Alive (Aliieva) has 10+ years working in Project Management and an Agile environment.

She has managed and consulted on Technical, Construction, Telecom, Retail and Engineering projects. Aina is a Transformation Leader, Coach & Mentor. She helps individuals, teams and organizations in their transformation journey. Aina is passionate about productivity, creating a positive work environment and building Dream teams.

Aina has a Masters's degree in electrical engineering and an MBA in technology. She holds PMP and PMI-ACP certificates. Aina is a proud member of PMI CWCC (Canadian West Coast Chapter), PMIT (Toronto Chapter), PMI Ukraine Chapter and UAE PMI. She is also a Program Manager, Disciplined Agile in PMI CWCC and DA Ambassador in PMIT.

Aina is an experienced public speaker and coach. In her free time, Aina participates in different mentorship programs, speaks at webinars and interviews people for her blog.

She can be contacted at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/aina-aliieva/>