



Meet Me at The Clubhouse!

By Ioana Good

There's a newer way to interview these days, and plenty of folks are talking about it! Clubhouse, a social media network, first gained notoriety when Elon Musk, Bill Gates, and Oprah dropped into Clubhouse rooms and started having conversations during the height of covid. Lately, we have seen an uptick in clients talking with members of the press via this application, and we have provided training and guidance to ensure successful interviews. In fact, Clubhouse has become so prevalent that we have begun incorporating these types of interviews into PR strategy plans for our clients. This social network is like a podcast where people can listen in live and even be given the opportunity to join in and comment. The platform is designed for use on an iPhone or Android phone and while you can install it on a tablet, the full experience is designed for use on a phone. They do have a website, but it simply directs you to install the iOS or Android app to use the platform. Here's what you need to know about the app, along with some media training tips to consider.

What is it, and when did it launch?

Launched in March of 2020, Clubhouse coincided with the beginning of the covid pandemic in the US and was originally by invite only. That changed in July 2021 when the platform was opened to anyone who wanted to install the app and join. In the early days, there were few people on the app, but that's changed now; the app has grown dramatically in popularity and made its way into the media/journalism space and now reports a user base of over 6 million.

"I think of Clubhouse as interactive podcasting," said Jamie Gold, CKD, CAPS, MCCWC, who writes for Forbes.com and is also a wellness design consultant and author of *Wellness by Design: A Room-by-Room Guide to Optimizing Your Home for Health, Fitness, and Happiness* (Tiller Press, 2020). "It's a phenomenal platform for easily sharing information and allowing participants to ask questions of experts. Just as with a podcast or, presumably, a deposition or trial, you wouldn't go in without

preparation and focus. Also, like the law, I'd imagine, you want your experts to feel comfortable and ready. Sending some questions their way in advance is helpful to them and to the flow of your event. You can still have an engaging discussion, but everyone feels more relaxed and ready."

Is it secure?

Like any popular platform, hackers have tried to use the name to do harm by putting up a fake website and bogus app to attempt to steal login credentials. "It's unfortunate that we have to be so diligent at all times about security threats. But this is the world we live in. Education and training are critical for the whole employee base," says David Touchton, President of FSO Services, a company that provides security consulting.

Preparing for a Clubhouse Session

Most are familiar with the on-air or print options, but with many working remotely, we see a definite uptick in source interviews via podcasts, radio, and Clubhouse interviews. These new mediums add complexity, as interviewees need to understand some of the technology in addition to traditional media training. It's essential to take the time to learn about how Clubhouse works on your phone to feel comfortable joining a Clubhouse room for a media appearance. First, you will need to download the app and follow the prompts on your phone. It will ask you to include your headshot, your website, and your bio so others can learn about you.

The conversation will begin from your phone at the specified time organized by your reporter and PR practitioner. The interview will be live so be sure to take the interview from a quiet room. Silence your phone, computer, and any other distractions.

Spend some time researching the reporter, the stories they have covered, and their general beat so you can be helpful and add valuable soundbites. Are they reporting about employment law, a high-profile litigation case or real estate trend? Think about what examples you could offer to make their story more interesting. After all, reporters will do their own research, but they will rely on you to provide industry knowledge and color.

Work with your PR practitioner to identify talking points in advance that align with your business development goals. Jot down those main points and practice, practice, practice. Even those who are gifted public speakers need to prepare in advance to ensure a successful interview.

Stay up to date with current news trends relating to your industry and work those into your conversation. "It's not enough to skim the news to identify news trends," says Elle Walch, who oversees marketing and business development at Ball Janik, LLP. "We are constantly meeting with our attorneys and talking about what they are seeing in their industry and what their clients are asking. These are some of the topics we are strategically focusing on."

Building awareness can be done by highlighting your latest product. For instance, Ball Janik launched Claimroadmap.com in time for Hurricane Season. This service helps educate consumers regarding the process of filing property damage claims on a local and national scale. "Every time you have a new product or offering, you have to build brand awareness," says Camron Wilde, who oversees branding and advertising efforts at Ball Janik, LLP. "Not only did we showcase our latest product, but we built meaningful discussion around it by engaging in public relations efforts.

As you add Clubhouse to your public relations and business development strategy, it is important to define your goals. What topics will enhance your business? Check out the app and explore the various rooms to see which ones will most benefit you.

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