

Social networks tuning into talk

19 March 2021



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In a break from the stylized photos or videos served up as eye candy on TikTok, Instagram and other social networks, Clubhouse has revived an appetite for unsweetened conversation.

Since its launch nearly a year ago, Clubhouse has been letting users host talks on topics of their choosing in virtual "rooms" that other members of the service are free to enter.

Social media stalwarts are scrambling to prevent users from being lured to audio-only online rivals, especially as people grow weary of staring at screens in a time of remote working, learning and playing.

Twitter has been testing "Spaces" since December, hoping to add the group discussion feature soon. The one-to-many messaging service last year began letting users send spoken tweets of 140 seconds or shorter.

Facebook-owned Instagram recently expanded its "Live Rooms" to allow as many as four people to stream video of virtual get-togethers for fans, and it says an audio-only version is on the way.

Facebook itself is reported to be working on a Clubhouse-style offering, internally referred to as "Fireside," on its main social network.

Fireside is also the name of an app already being tested by a startup, which bills itself as a venue where podcasters can engage listeners and make money in the process, according to tech news website The Verge.

The budding Capiche FM platform says its aim is to give anyone the tools to launch an online radio show, letting listeners chime in via live chat and even ask to join the on-air conversation.

San Francisco-based Discord launched some six years ago as a platform for video game fans to communicate on while playing, but has since become a venue where friends get together to chat, virtually watch films or even work.

Late last year, the company announced it had raised another \$100 million in funding for expansion, and was reported to be valued at as much as \$7 billion.

Discord was among [online platforms](#) that banned extremist supporters of former president Donald Trump after the deadly attack on the US Capitol in January.

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APA citation: Social networks tuning into talk (2021, March 19) retrieved 18 August 2022 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2021-03-social-networks-tuning.html>

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