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From Slush to startups: 15 % of alumni go on to found new companies

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Slush, the world's leading startup event and largest gathering of venture capital firms, brings together 13,000 attendees, including 6,000 startups and 3,500 investors. The investors represent a total of $4T+ in assets under management. Slush's mission is to support founders and facilitate meaningful connections, as well as sharing learnings from builder to builder. Building such a meaningful event also provides a valuable learning experience for the team behind it and has inspired many to become founders themselves.

SLUSH IS A LAUNCHPAD FOR FOUNDERS

Slush alumni are at the core of building the future of European tech as 15% (68 out of total 459) of the team go on to become founders, according to data released today by Slush in collaboration with **Dealroom** and leading global venture firm **Accel**. This is more than double compared to the percentage of young people aged 18–24 founding businesses in Finland (GEM 2021). In total, almost 70 former Slushers have gone on to found their own companies after their time working for the world-renowned startup event.

"We want to be the best Founder Factory in Europe, by opening doors to the startup world and giving young people the tools and confidence to build world-changing companies" says **Aino Bergius**, 26, CEO at Slush.

FROM SLUSH CEO TO FOUNDER

Out of the 15% of Slush alumni who have gone on to become entrepreneurs, one of the most famous examples is **Miki Kuusi**, co-founder and former CEO of Wolt and Head of DoorDash International. After spending four years as the CEO of Slush, he founded Wolt in 2014, which in 2022 joined forces with US-based S&P500 DoorDash.

"At Slush, you get a lot of responsibility at a young age to actually try and build something world-class. For me personally, it was a foundational learning experience for how to form a vision and lead people towards it, all the while failing and iterating over and over again—all in a pursuit to build something truly great and meaningful. That experience eventually led to us starting Wolt, and many of our other fellow Slushers to become founders as well." Miki Kuusi shares.

A NEW GENERATION OF SLUSH ALUMNI FOUNDERS

The last couple of years have seen a surge of a new generation of former Slushers starting their own companies. Some examples include:

- **Eerika Savolainen**, co-founder & CEO of **Clair** (2025)
- **Niilo Pirttijärvi**, co-founder & CEO of **Inven** (2022)
- **Andreas Saari**, co-founder & co-CEO of **Paebbl** (2021)

Some Slush alumni have even found their co-founders from Slush:

- **Elmo Pakkanen** & **Tommi Bergström** founded **Ambio** in 2023
- **Mikko Mäntylä** & **Miika Huttunen** founded **Realm** in 2023 and have hired a number of former Slushers to join their team: 50% of the current Realm team previously worked at Slush.

"Slush condenses five years of classroom learning into a single year of hands-on company building. We've lived it, and that's why we know how to value it in the people we hire", previous Slush President Mäntylä explains.

INVESTORS SUPPORT THE SLUSH DNA

The Slush experience is highly regarded by investors. Lifeline Ventures is a Finnish, early-stage VC firm that has invested in multiple startups founded by former Slushers. Some of these companies include Realm, Ambio, Flow AI and Inven. Timo Ahopelto, serial entrepreneur and founding partner of Lifeline Ventures, described the influence of Slush:

"Slush is a human accelerator. It gives young people ambition, the opportunity for exponential growth and ownership from day one. These are all things that lay the groundwork for becoming successful founders.

Sonali De Rycker, Partner at Accel, states: "Since its founding in 2008, Slush has evolved into one of the world's premier startup events — the beating heart of the Nordic tech ecosystem and a launchpad for entrepreneurial talent. From unicorns like Wolt to emerging companies such as Paebbl and Realm, as well as venture firms like Wave, Slush has consistently fostered the ambition and determination that drives future founders."

SLUSH CULTURE AS THE DRIVING FORCE

At Slush, young people get to practice being a founder—every Slusher has full ownership of their domain, enabling them to make real decisions as if Slush were their own startup. It's a future founder's playground, a place to test, fail, and learn what building something from scratch actually feels like. Combined with the mentorship and connections Slush offers, experience gathered within just a year can take an aspiring founder a long way.

"As we say in our culture memo: Slush is not a destination, it's a launchpad. We're proud of all of the alumni whose Slush experience has supported their founding journeys, and we look forward to seeing many more companies take off from Slush in the future," Bergius concludes.

The report was conducted during the fall of 2025 by Slush, Dealroom, and Accel based on alumni data provided by Slush. The alumni dataset included 459 names. The research is part of a wider series of reports done by Accel and Dealroom on the Founder Factories of Europe.

Methodology

We consider a company to be part of Slush's alumni network when a founder has held a full-time position at Slush for more than five months (at least one Slush event cycle). In addition to tech startups, the list includes VCs and accelerators, as well as agencies and consultancies that play a key role in the European startup ecosystem. Companies that have been acquired or ceased operations have been included in the counts.

About Slush

Slush, led by students and recent graduates, is a not-for-profit organization on a mission to help and create founders to change the world. Based in Helsinki, the event brings together a curated crowd of European startups, world-class investors and tech journalists.

Slush 2025 in Numbers:

- Slush 2025 is the world's biggest gathering of venture capital, with over $4 trillion in assets under one roof.
- The event brings over 13,000 attendees to Helsinki, including:
    - 6,000 startup founders & operators
    - 3,500 investors
    - 250 media representatives.

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