

# EVENT HACKING GUIDE

BY

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# **EVENT HACKING GUIDE BY SLUSH**

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What you're holding in your hand is the 2015 edition of the Event Hacking Guide built by Slush. Welcome! We decided to put this bundle of information together for you so that you can get the most out of Slush and other tech conferences you might be attending in the future. While it is a fact that the founders in startups are always busy and focusing on product and business development, you should still make room to prepare for the most important conferences that you attend. From this hacking guide you'll find helpful tips, tricks and advice on how to make the most out of attending events. We hope that you enjoy the guide and see you at Slush!

**BEST OF LUCK,  
THE SLUSH TEAM**

# **WE HAVE IDENTIFIED CRUCIAL THINGS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN PARTICIPATING IN A LARGE INTERNATIONAL TECH EVENT:**

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## **1. 80% OF THE WORK HAPPENS BEFORE THE EVENT**

- 1.1 Start early.
- 1.2 The English language is a key to success.
- 1.3 Have your pitch and story bulletproof.
- 1.4 A pitch is a pitch, but a meeting with an investor is a discussion.
- 1.5 Do your homework and identify the key people in advance.
- 1.6 Create an event schedule & note side events.
- 1.7 Set concrete goals for the conference.
- 1.8 Slush EXTRA: Succeeding at matchmaking starts from the registration.

## **2. MAKE IT HAPPEN AT THE EVENT**

- 2.1 Differentiate.
- 2.2 Succeed at your meetings.
- 2.3 Always be on time.
- 2.4 Don't forget yourself.
- 2.5 Slush EXTRA: Get the most out of networking and recruiting areas.

## **3. THE WORK DOESN'T STOP AFTER THE EVENT**

- 3.1 Remember to follow up.
- 3.2 Take the time to reflect.
- 3.3 Slush EXTRA: Stay tuned for other events.

80%

**OF THE WORK  
HAPPENS BEFORE  
THE EVENT**



# START EARLY.

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**When attending an event the size of Slush, the work must start at least two or three weeks before the event.**

Do not expect to show up unprepared and find the right advisors or investors. The magic is in the work you put into identifying the right activities prior to the event. Keep reading to find out what are the steps you can take already before attending a conference to maximize your possibilities in succeeding at the event.

# 1.2

## **THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS A KEY TO SUCCESS.**

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**This cannot be overemphasized. Your English skills do not need to be excellent – as long as you get the message through!**

Remember that all the materials you create for the event represent your company. Make sure that the language you use is appropriate and correct, otherwise you might give an unprofessional image of yourself. If you're not quite fluent, you can use a professional translator or a friend that you trust to make sure that you "look good on paper".

In the past, companies have trained their English skills together with English language professionals to make sure that they can deliver their pitch. This is highly recommended if you're unsure with your current skillset. If companies have not felt sure about their skills to answer questions, they've for example brought friends with English skills with them to Slush and have taught them everything about the company, so that they have been able to answer questions in English. Whatever your level of English is, having a positive attitude towards learning and improvement is the most important thing!

# 1.3

## **HAVE YOUR PITCH AND STORY BULLETPROOF.**

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**Remember to highlight the team, advisors, backers and existing investors. This proves the track record of your company.**

Practice your pitch beforehand. A lot. Make sure you're confident with it and can speak it through without any hassle. Think what the investors might ask from you and plan how you're going to answer to those questions already in advance.

The more background information you can provide in your pitch, the better. If your company has been able to gather impressive advisors or supporters, be sure to mention them. Praise from someone respected is the best kind of support your startup can get.

If you do have support from powerful backers, this is a clear sign of you being trustworthy for anyone thinking of investing in your company or working with you.

# 1.4

## **A PITCH IS A PITCH, BUT A MEETING WITH AN INVESTOR IS A DISCUSSION.**

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**A meeting is a two-way dialogue. Companies often prepare to pitch, but freeze when in a meeting. Think about how you can have a casual 20-minute discussion about your company, and what the frequently asked questions are.**

You should have three formats of spoken communications prepared: an elevator pitch, a proper pitch (with possible materials), and a longer interactive dialogue. Most companies can pitch, but if someone interrupts you and asks a question, you need to switch into discussion mode. Have proper answers to all questions; don't just say that something is so because you say so.

Remember that people ask questions because they are interested in your startup and want to learn more. If no one has any questions, it usually means that they have not understood your pitch. If this is the reaction you keep getting, try to practice your pitch and figure out what the problem is.



# 1.5

## **DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND IDENTIFY THE KEY PEOPLE IN ADVANCE.**

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**This is again a point that cannot be overemphasized. Several events publish the investors, media and other key stakeholders such as speakers who will be at the event on their website. Even though contact information is often not shared, you can look it up yourself! When you have a list of people you'd like to meet with the contact info, almost all the work is done. Start finding the introductions or just be directly in touch and try to set things up.**

Places like LinkedIn, Crunchbase, AngelList, Facebook, Twitter and various other social media sites are your friends. You would also be surprised by how much information Google will have of any particular attendee at Slush. Try to make sure that the information you do get is up-to-date. Investors move from fund to fund and reporters might change the media they write for.

Once at Slush, a company had printed out the pictures and names of every single investor they wanted to meet during the event so that they were able to check if the person they were going to approach was the right one. This might be low tech but we can promise you it's effective. Remembering everyone's name and face is going to be impossible so hack your way forward.

As events keep growing in venue size, attendee size and in number of side events it becomes crucial for you to know your way around the whole maze. Therefore, we recommend that you study the map of the venue beforehand and locate the key places like the meeting area. Also knowing which side events and parties to attend is important, these are the places where you can start building relationships with key people like investors and clients. But remember that no one wants to be pitched at during parties, so keep the discussion light and follow up suggesting a pitch the next day.

# 1.6

## CREATE AN EVENT SCHEDULE.

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**Big conferences usually have several different stages, restaurants, partner areas, startup booths and other activities and satellite events you can take part in. With so many options available, how can you execute if you don't have a plan?**

Immediately after an event agenda is published, you should work to have an action plan for the event. Use the contacts you have developed (1.5. Do your homework and identify the key people in advance), book meetings and find interesting program and opportunities.

It's important to execute this part properly before the event. Make a clear schedule for yourself where you'll mark down time for meetings, program, mingling, demo booths and eating.

# 1.7

## SET CONCRETE GOALS FOR THE CONFERENCE.

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**To get the most out of the conference you should have a concrete idea of what you want to achieve by attending. Do you want to get to know investors, get more customers or have more contacts?**

Whatever your goal is you should try to “gamify” your conference experience. If you want new contacts, set a goal of collecting 200 business cards. If you want more customers, set a goal of locking down 5 new customers and 20 new leads. If you want new investors, set a goal of talking to at least 20 different investors during the event.

Setting concrete goals like these makes it easier for you to continuously track your performance at the event and you’ll know if you have to do more work to reach your goals. It’s also a great way to check how well you did afterwards.

# 1.8

## SLUSH EXTRA:

# SUCCEEDING AT MATCHMAKING STARTS FROM THE REGISTRATION.

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At Slush, investors and media get access to all the information you provide. Getting noticed on the matchmaking platform starts out with a great registration. Filling out the registration form in detail and thoroughly will give you the best chance of getting noticed. But what to write as a short description? How to describe your company in the best way possible? This is what to think about when registering your company.

### 1) REMEMBER YOUR GOAL

Always remember what you're aiming at. As PROfounders Capital's Sean Seaton-Rogers put it: "The goal of a company description is to get someone interested enough to meet. That's the only goal. So, it's a matter of balancing the current status and stats, the vision of the business – the path to bridge the two. As much as I hate to say it, using the phrase "the XXX for XXX" actually works well."

### 2) SHORT AND LONG DESCRIPTION

Short description = tell what your company does in one sentence. That's it. Do it in plain language, please.

Long description = Describe in more detail what and *how* you do it, expanding on what you just wrote in the short description. The best descriptions are very informative & awaken interest at the same time. Ask other people (not affiliated with your business) to read through your descriptions if unsure what works.

### **3) COMPANY OR PRODUCT?**

What is relevant about your company? In some cases it's better to talk about the company, in some cases about the product.

### **4) WHY OR HOW?**

What wakes interest? Often it's more interesting to hear what you're doing and what kind of an impact it has than how you do it. Investors also want to know what makes your company special and interesting enough to meet.

### **5) NOTE THE CHARACTER LIMITS**

The short description should not be longer than 80 characters and the long description has a maximum of 300 characters. If you write more, the text will be simply cut in the middle and investors won't see what you've written. So don't babble but go straight to the point.

### **6) BE INDIVIDUAL**

Most importantly, remember that there is not just one way to write a great description. Be unique, be interesting and rock the registration.

### **7) KEEP THE INFO UP TO DATE**

Have you registered already? No panic! You can edit your descriptions through your Slush profile all the way until the event, so remember to keep the info up to date.

### **8) MAKE USE OF THE MATCHMAKING PLATFORM**

Since November of 2013, the tracked meetings at Slush have led to half a billion dollars in early-stage venture capital transactions between the participants. And we're sure you're eager to add to that number.

This year the matchmaking platform is going through big changes and is growing a brain of its own. It'll automatically give investors suggestions on companies that might fit their investment criteria. This makes filling the registration out properly even more important.

Every startup has five requests to meet investors that they can send out at the same time. Once an investor either accepts or rejects your request, you'll get it back. This means that you have to be very careful with your choice of investor and actually study how good a fit you'd be for their portfolio. The most well known investors might have tens or hundreds of requests at any given time, so adding yours might not be a great strategy.

**MAKE IT  
HAPPEN AT  
THE EVENT**

# 2.1

## DIFFERENTIATE.

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**Whether it's some cool gimmick, conspicuous clothing, or just being very friendly and outspoken. People will always remember a fun and outspoken character! This might not be something you are born with, but it's something you can learn.**

Peter Vesterbacka visited a technology conference pitching competition in Cannes in 2001 and has this recollection of the event: "The winner was really great... I think they had some type of an IT platform they were working on. Not really sure what it was and can't remember the guy. But he had white shoes!" As funny as this sounds, little things often make the biggest difference. You don't have to dress like a clown to attract attention but you can for example cover the table at your booth with an orange tablecloth or wear a yellow hat. Your imagination is the limit!

Antti Ylimutka from the Leningrad Cowboys dressed as one of the Cowboys in 2013 and attracted a huge amount of interest to him. This allowed him to pitch to everyone who wanted to take a picture with him as people kept approaching him all the time.

# 2.2

## **SUCCEED AT YOUR MEETINGS.**

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**To succeed at your meetings, it's important to plan ahead. Decide what your goal with the meeting is and think what you want to say. Always check out the investor (or whoever you're meeting with) beforehand to be as prepared as possible.**

You should also take into account that the person you're meeting has a limited amount of time with you, respect their schedule and the schedule of other companies that have meetings with them. So go straight to the point and remember: you can always continue the discussion at a later time.

When going to a meeting, have your presentation in top notch condition. Remember though that this meeting is not a pitching competition, it's a meeting for you to get to know the investor and the investor to get to know you. It's much better to have a discussion instead of just pitching the investor.



# 2.3

## **ALWAYS BE ON TIME.**

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**The schedule at tech conferences is tight for everyone and you can't afford mistakes. The meeting slots are only 30 minutes and you need to use every last minute of those to get out the results you want. Keeping your schedule in order makes the event better for everyone.**

Always be on time for meetings you've set. No one will wait for you for 15 minutes, no matter what the reason for you being late is. Getting another meeting after you've missed one for being late is next to impossible, so this is important. Also familiarize yourself with the venue so that you don't get lost at critical times.

# 2.4

## **DON'T FORGET YOURSELF.**

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**Whether you attend an event representing yourself or your company, first impression is important. Being extremely tired and unenergetic when meeting new people doesn't give a good impression, so take care of yourself: eat, sleep and drink enough of water.**

Even if the event days are busy and full of action, remember to fuel yourself. Take a few breaks to eat breakfast, lunch and snacks. If you're filled with meetings, how about making one of them a lunch meeting? Don't forget to drink water either and keep yourself hydrated at all times.

Even if there might be several parties during an event, remember to get a good night's sleep as well! What might be obvious but could be forgotten easily is that you represent your company also during after parties and being blind drunk is probably not the best way to make use of them.

# 2.5

## **SLUSH EXTRA:**

# **HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF RECRUITING AREA AND ROUNDTABLES.**

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**Two Slush specific things that can be extremely beneficial for startups are the recruiting opportunities and roundtables. Do your event goals include new employees or getting answers to a few crucial questions regarding your company? Read further!**

This year, for the first time ever, Slush will have a recruiting area. The area will host speed dating sessions, clinics, booths of startups that are hiring and stage program around building and growing the team. There will also be an interview lounge where you can chat with potential new team members.

In addition, a jobs site will be published on the Slush website during the fall. All attending startups can post job positions on the site via their Slush profile, and interested applicants can express their wish to meet at Slush.

Roundtables are your chance to learn from investors and industry experts in intimate 8 person set-ups. Each professional will come in with their own topic and open the floor to questions after a short introductory part. You'll have the opportunity to ask questions that have always nagged you. There are no stupid questions at the Roundtables, they are the professionals' way to give back to the community and the idea is for them to be approachable and open. It's also a great way to form the first contact with an investor.

If you're interested in attending the roundtables or be present at the recruiting area, follow the Slush social media channels and newsletters closely to get information about how to participate.

**THE WORK  
DOESN'T  
STOP AFTER  
THE EVENT**

# 3.1

## REMEMBER THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWING UP.

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**The event you're attending doesn't end at the moment you walk out of the conference halls. Following up properly is one of the most important aspects of making an event a success for you and your startup.**

So you've managed to collect a nice big bunch of business cards, had chats with potential investors and almost locked down a few new customers but for any of those to be valuable for you and turn into actual results, you will need to follow up on each and every one of them.

We recommend that you send your first follow-up as soon as possible, 5 minutes after seeing the person might be a bit too much but in the evening before hitting the parties is totally acceptable and recommended. Make the email short, down to the point and if possible add a personal touch to it (e.g. a note on a topic you've discussed). Keep the email simple and don't push your offer down anyone's throat, they'll appreciate the soft touch.

A nifty little tip is to carry a pen around and after you've finished talking to someone write down a few notes on their business card ("promised 20% off", "interested in investing 50k€", "could help with US contacts" etc.).

# 3.2

## **TAKE THE TIME TO REFLECT.**

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**After the event, sit down with your team and talk. How did you do? Did you reach your goals? You won't develop if you don't take the trouble.**

Go back to the goals you set before the events. Did you reach them? How did you benefit from the event? If you didn't reach your goals – why not?

Also take time to think about how you could develop and what you could do better next time. But don't be too hard on yourself – also remember to think about what you were good at and what you want to repeat at the next event you're attending.

# 3.3

**SLUSH EXTRA:**

## **STAY TUNED FOR OTHER SLUSH EVENTS.**

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**Slush isn't only one two-day event in Helsinki,  
but a group of events around the world.**

In 2015, Slush events were organized in Cape Town, Reykjavik, Tokyo, Mexico, São Paulo, and Hanoi among others. If you want to attend events outside of Europe as well, follow Slush on social media to find out where and when the next event will be organized.