

## Enhancing the Volunteer Program at Slush

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## Abstract



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<p>The thesis was commissioned by Slush. It was executed as a qualitative research and the end results are a suggestion on how Slush could enhance their volunteer experience. The foundation of the thesis is based on a combination of The Self-Determination theory and Mastery, Purpose and Autonomy theory.</p> <p>In the theoretic frame of the thesis the constantly changing work life and new generations that are passionate workers when their motivators are clear. In this section I focused on the current motivational theories, what are motivators and how do they affect the volunteers.</p> <p>The results were found through individual interviews focusing on the theme of motivation and the experiences of volunteering at Slush 2017. The participants were former volunteers who were a part of making Slush 2017. The purpose of the interviews was to find out what were the motivations of the volunteers, how would they like to see the program evolve and what would they want more. The results found that more focus should be shifted especially into the training of the team leads and group leads.</p> <p>In end of the thesis is an analysis comparing the answers of the participants on how the program could be developed. These tools are meant for the commissioner and possible other companies struggling with volunteer work and motivating the new generations. This thesis is very current as the subject is a new area to conquer with very little research yet to be done.</p> <p>The conclusions were that volunteers are generally very satisfied with the program. However, in the interviews both team leads and group leads had challenges with their leadership skills despite the support they have received in the preparations to their role.</p>	
<b>Key words</b> Volunteering, motivation, events, leadership	

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# 1 Introduction

I was inspired by this topic for my thesis as I have been a volunteer in different teams for many years at Slush and in 2017, I got the chance to lead the whole volunteer project. It was very insightful and encouraged me to look deeper in to what could be improved.

In a hectic yet so short event motivating volunteers has been a question to tackle. How volunteers are engaged, and their interests sparked this year and for years to come is a very interesting subject as well as very current as the event has expanded in recent years and volunteer turnover is fast.

Volunteering has throughout time played an important role in the Western societies. Not only has it been linked with preventing social exclusion, it's also a great way to find like-minded people who can provide peer support. (Bridges Karr, Meijs & Metz, 2014) Right now in Finland there is also great interest in organizing even more events in various different fields with volunteers in the assembly. Up to 40% of Finns donate their time in different kinds of volunteer works, which has gone up since 2015 when it was only 33%. The average volunteer does approximately 15 hours per month, which has declined from 2015 when the time spent volunteering was still 18 hours per month. (Rahkonen, 2018)

In this thesis my approach to the subject is qualitative, which was produced by interviewing Slush 2017 volunteers and reflecting on my own experiences running the volunteer team. This approach was seen as the best method for how Slush works is a very unique and specific way.

This thesis is right now very relevant and needed for Slush as the event has grown year after another and the meaning of being a volunteer has become even more popular. Now is also the time to influence the upcoming Slush 2018 Helsinki event and the experience the volunteers receive when participating. Besides the needs of Slush, the thesis is of use to millennial employers. Since the thesis investigates what motivates millennials it is a very relevant topic to the ongoing trends and struggles many companies are having while hiring millennials.

The aim of this thesis is to improve the volunteer program for Slush Helsinki by reflecting into the experiences of the volunteers of Slush 2017.

In this thesis the questions to solve are:

Q1. What motivates the volunteers to join Slush?

Q2. How could Slush enhance their volunteer program?

The fundamental idea is to improve the experience of the volunteers through listening to their wishes and improving the program with the knowledge gathered. This thesis is written from the perspective of Slush organization.

Key concepts used in this thesis are:

*Aalto Ventures Program*, which will be from now on referred to as AVP in this thesis. AVP organizes with the Slush People team the Leadership Experience training for the Team Leads and Group Leads to get the most out of their role as a leader.

*Group Lead* Most teams in Slush have Group Leads in the teams. These are the ones who recruit the volunteers and are responsible for them. There are about 200 Group Leads in Slush. In this thesis I will be referring to these as GL.

*Millennials* (or Generation Y) are born depending on the source between 1980 and 1995 or 2000. (Rouse, Haughn, 2018a) They have grown up in a world that is constantly changing. This has caused their mindset and expectations of life to be very different compared to previous generations. (Goldman Sachs, 2018) Many companies have expressed the struggle of motivating millennials. Many millennials value the balance of different areas of life and tend to think that unpleasant work isn't worth it. (Rouse, Haughn, 2018b)

*Team Lead* at Slush every team has a Team Lead. These are the people responsible of running the team before and during the event. There are about 70 Team Leads in Slush. In this thesis I will be referring to these as TL.

*Team Links* are members of the paid Slush team members. The Team Links are the first contact person of the Team Leads. In the end the Team Links are the people responsible for their specific areas, which the Team Leads are running.

*Volunteer/Volunteers* are people who are willing to work without pay for something they might not necessarily benefit from. (Bridges Karr, Meijs & Metz, 2014) Volunteers are mainly but not limited to students applying to volunteer at Slush. They work in teams they have applied to. They work around the event depending on the team if they are before, during or after working. There are 2,400 volunteers at Slush.

*Volunteer Events* mean the events organized specifically for volunteers. These include Talkoot –events, Volunteers Day and Slush Volunteers Afterparty. These events are organized to unite the volunteers, make them feel that they are a part of a bigger picture and build the community around Slush.

*Volunteer Work* means the work effort done by the volunteers.

The thesis will start with presenting Slush and the volunteer culture there. This is followed by introducing the motivational theories and research process. The last part of the thesis sums the interviews, conclusions and results.

## 2 Volunteer Work at Slush

This chapter introduces the commissioner of this thesis, which is Slush. In this chapter I will also be presenting the volunteer program.

### 2.1 Slush Event



Figure 1. Slush Main Stage and vibe from the event. (Kuusisto, 2017)

Slush is a non-profit community but also a student driven two-day startup and technology conference organized in Helsinki but also in various locations around the world. We will be focusing on the Helsinki event recruiting and volunteer experience. In 2017 the Helsinki event hosted 20,000 visitors, 2,600 startups representing their business and ideas and 1,500 investors looking for new interests.

Slush has a rather short history as it has been around merely 10 years. It focuses on the needs of entrepreneurs and serves to help the community. The startup community is very tightknit in the Nordics and local communities play a big role in helping each other out. The community is very open and welcoming to new talents and encourages people to join. (Elmborg, 2017)

The purpose of Slush is to motivate, unite and help current and future global entrepreneurs and startups in finding and reaching their goals. To reach this purpose Slush needs the support of the community around the startup ecosystem in the Nordics and also be active among the community around the year and not just on the event itself. The community also has repeatedly expressed the need for Slush in order to grow and become known on a global scale. Nowadays the Nordics are one of the centers in the global startup scene (Carlstrom, 2016) and considered to be some of the best countries to start a company in.

By making the Nordics more appealing venture capitalists and investors are more interested in the area and Slush is a method for them to save time and get to know all the interesting companies suitable for the investor's interests under one roof. In 2017 some of the most notable speakers and attendees were Vice President of the United States Al Gore, member of the British royal family Prince William, the Finnish president Sauli Niinistö, President of Tencent Martin Lau, CEO and co-founder of Supercell Ilkka Paananen and co-founder of Spotify Daniel Ek. (Slush, 2018a)

## **2.2 HR Process at Slush**

The organizational structure of Slush is very decentralized, which means the decision-making and daily operations are distributed evenly to the staff, instead of just the top management deciding. (Woods, 2018) Decentralization in an organization like Slush is especially important. Business is in full swing the closer to the event decisions are made. There isn't time to involve everyone, but just the people that must know or sometimes even not having the time to wait for a round of comments. Delegating especially by Team Links but also by others is highly recommended as the event and end product is a team effort.

Slush has also a very flat hierarchy structure. This means there aren't many management layers between the employees and top level. Rather only few levels all in all. (Morgan, 2015) As Morgan mentions in his article based on his book, the nervous system of the company has to work wherever and whenever. At Slush most communicating works through Slack and Google Drive. This combined with the autonomous decision-making works well in the rapidly moving environment. The tools being used make Slush in the eyes of potential employees desirable as they represent the easy and approachable organizations Generation Y's and Z's who grew up with technology, are interested in. (Gou-dreau, 2013) During the event volunteers get to experience some of this, since they are asked to perform under pressure and encouraged to make decisions based on what they

believe is best in the situation. These all are a part of why Slush is a flat and fluid organization. In fluid organizations the situations may change fast so the people reacting in those moments need to answer demand. (Mazal, 2014)

The HR process in Slush is very casual and straightforward. These are also core values appreciated at the office in everything from clothing to making business. Nobody needs to master their area of responsibility when they come in, as they will learn it as they start with the task. Most of the applicants come in by referral. Those who don't come by referral are usually proactive and reach out to the team members. These cases are evaluated by their past achievements, motivations and general attitude. There are no public openings as the structure of the organization is fluid and might change rapidly. The teams are referred as Spring Team, which is everyone who starts work as a full-time, half time or project worker during springtime and Fall Team, which is everyone from the Spring Team as well as the Team Leads that join during August. The hiring of staff is focused on two times of the year: the beginning of the year and springtime. To make the process more transparent, in 2017 it was decided that all paid personnel start during spring and all volunteer-based tasks start in August. Volunteers and Group Leads are recruited during August, September and October.

The search for Team Leads starts in April with a form sent to all Team Leads and Group Leads from the previous year. This way it is easy to reach as many potentially interested and well performed members. The form closes in May. Besides this the current Spring Team members of Slush can share the application amongst people they believe would do well and fit the role in search. The people team first interviews each candidate to screen them that they are suitable and have the time to set aside for Slush. After this they make a proposal to the Team Links with suggestions of who fits and where. This is followed by one on one talks with the Team Links and possibly other members of the team to ensure they get along and have similar views of the task.

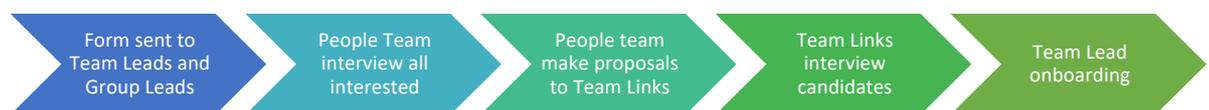


Figure 2. Team Lead recruiting process, which takes place during spring and summer.



Figure 3. Group Lead and Volunteer recruiting process which takes place during the beginning of fall.

With staff changes taking place at Slush during the next few years, we are now in the switching point with Generation Y's and Generation Z's. Slush as a workplace can seem as the perfect workplace for a generation Z person. Not only are Gen Z's more willing to volunteer, they are also more interested in entrepreneurship. (Schawbel, 2014) It's no longer about how much a person gets payed but rather generation Z's are looking for innovative companies where traditional work methods are challenged, and new more efficient working methods are used. These include the workplace being very tight knit, fun and places where they can learn as they work. (Tapscott, 2010)

The change of staff at Slush can be described as rapid, with a typical career in the house only a few years old before switching to a new organization. This keeps thoughts and methods fresh and new as people switch. The downside of this method is the loss of some important silent information. Most of the predecessors will train their replacements, but in the unfortunate case of someone going abroad or otherwise hard to contact, the written testament is the only reference for them. From a volunteer perspective this is a perfect method. It keeps the volunteer experience updated with the newest trends the changing people bring with them.

### **2.3 Slush Volunteer Program**

This chapter is to make the Slush Volunteer Program more familiar.

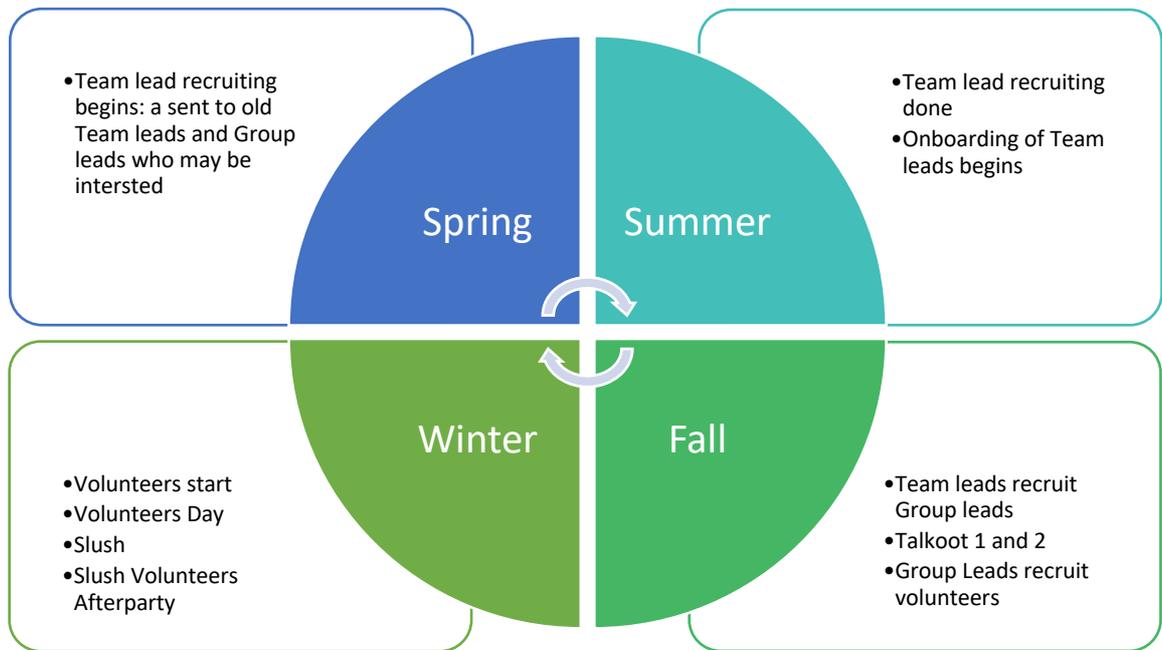


Figure 4. A year calendar to show what volunteer events happen per season.

Slush is a non-profit event, so it relies much on volunteer work. Since Slush is a student run organization, this has been one of the basic foundations for the event from the very beginning and made everything possible. Volunteers do many of the tasks that don't require much knowledge beforehand and aren't too challenging to execute.

The Slush team is built of members that are all around the year working for Slush. Some of these members have a role of being Slush Team Links. Team Links have certain Team Leads that they direct and can be the responsible managers of that team or those teams within Slush. The Team Links work actively with the Slush Team Leads.



Figure 5. Slush volunteer command chain explained.

The Team Leads are members of the Slush teams, but they are volunteers and so only work in the fall when all volunteers are recruited and start on their volunteer path. The Team Leads are responsible for a certain team within Slush, for example the Info team, so their resources are focused on running this one team. Team Leads are in charge of picking Group Leads for their teams. The Group Leads then again pick the volunteers into their groups. This is how the team is constructed. The volunteers' first contact person is the Group Leads, but the Team Lead leads the team.

In Slush 2017 there were over 2,400 volunteers participating. (Slush, 2018b) Not all applicants were able to join a team due to the limited team sizes. In comparison to 2015 when there were 1,500 volunteers, this is a huge change within just a few years. Volunteers participating are from over 50 different countries. (Slush, 2018) The volunteers get an amazing experience out of Slush that is proven by a work certificate. In addition to the possibility of attending the event the volunteers are offered food, snacks and beverages during their shifts and possibly during side events in addition to the community they are surrounded and have the chance to meet. In some universities and schools there is the possibility to gain study points from participating as a volunteer.

## 2.4 Volunteer Events

To unite the volunteers and build up a truly well-knit community the volunteers have the possibility to attend different events organized especially for them. These events are Talkoot 1 & 2, Volunteer's Day and the Volunteer Afterparty.



Figure 6. Volunteers making props at Talkoot. (Anttila)

In Finland we have this thing called 'talkoot', which is doing things as a group and can be translated as voluntary work for the community. In talkoot everyone volunteers for a greater good or cause, in this case the buildup and decorations of Slush are made in these events. At Slush we have two Talkoot events a month separate from each other. In 2016 the Talkoot 1 event was also made into a big street festival and an afterparty from there. In 2017 we continued with the idea, for Talkoot 1, eventually ending up with the conclusion that it is a bit too big of a production and something more laid back would be more suitable. At Talkoot 2 we organized a pizza and movie night after everything was done, which received compliments and was perceived more popular amongst volunteers.

The Volunteer's Day focuses on team building and educating the volunteers about Slush, the code of conduct at the event and hearing inspiring talks by public figures, entrepreneurs, actors and generally people who suit the description and who we find would help

the volunteers the most. The Volunteer's Day ends up in a party for the volunteers to bond in a more relaxed mode.

To thank the volunteers, a party is organized for only the volunteers after Slush. The afterparty usually has a thank you moment, publishing winners of competitions and live performances. This event is the final event and a sort of closing ceremony for many of the volunteers as they are done with their work for the event. There is some sort of snacks and food served as well as beverages both non-alcoholic and alcoholic. The atmosphere is very relaxed and there is a lot of socializing and networking going on between volunteers as they are united by the experience. In 2017 this day was the day before Finland's 100<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, which somewhat reflected in the number of volunteers joining the party.

Besides these events there are smaller gatherings organized by the Group Leads for their volunteers. These events are now organized by Slush but are encouraged to organize for building team spirit as the aim of these events is to have the team and volunteers getting to know each other. These gatherings are mainly organized in a relaxed vibe by bowling, seeing a movie, having dinner or beers, etc. The Group Leads in these events might bring up some important team specific updates to the volunteers, support and answer the questions the volunteers may have.

Some teams, such as the Slush Buddies team organize similar gatherings for the entire team to get to know each other. These events are usually bigger as the entire team with all the smaller groups within it is gathered there. Usually if the entire team is together there is some sort of agenda for the event concerning the entire team such as practicing or teaching team specific tasks or having team building activities to build trust and connections to volunteers outside their own group.

For Team Leads and Group Leads Slush organizes together with Aalto Venture Program AVP Leadership Experience training. This is for the Leads to get the most out of their experience as a leader. During the Leadership experience training the participants are challenged and supported to grow into their role as a leader. The training is meant for all volunteers in leading positions. For participants interested the Leadership Experience training is also eligible for study points. The course is organized under Aalto University, but can be implemented through the degree certificate and transferred via the Recognition of Previous Studies (RPL) system to other universities and applied science universities. The courses available are 1, 3 and 6 credit courses with 1 credit having the easiest tasks and 6 credits having more reflection and challenging tasks. The courses are highly recom-

mended to the volunteers and they have received very high praise from previous participants who have done the university course as well as attended the Leadership Experience sessions. The training also doubles as an information channel where Slush related official matters and updates can be announced.

## **2.5 Volunteer Sponsors**

Volunteer sponsors are helping by producing products or services at Slush volunteer events. In 2017 the Slush volunteer sponsors included Smartly.io, Aalto Ventures Program, Filosofian Akatemia, Futurice, Fazer, Nocco BCAA, Club Mate, Kilroy, Total Trivia and FIVR – Finnish Virtual Reality Association. Not only do the companies sponsor the events, they also get great publicity amongst the volunteers and a possibility to promote their services or companies and even recruit the volunteers.

In 2017 volunteer sponsors provided snacks at the volunteer area and at the different volunteer events. Sponsors were a part of involving the volunteers in the community scene in Finland and helping networking and promoting open positions in their organizations for the volunteers. Some sponsors provided training spaces for Leadership Experience trainings for both Team and Group Leads and were presenting their company and having inspiring speeches or question sessions in the events. Besides working on involving the volunteers in the community and helping take ownership of their own responsibilities, the meaning of the Leadership Experience course provided by Aalto Ventures Program, brings value to especially the Team and Group Leads.

## 2.6 Volunteer Profiles at Slush



Figure 7. Slush Volunteer photo. (Pentti, 2017)

The typical Slush volunteer applicant is a university level student. However, the background scope of the applicants is quite diverse. Based on the applications from 2016, the average applicant was 25 years old and studied at a university level institute. 90% of the applicants announced their nationality in the application. About 48% of the applicants that had announced their nationality were foreigners, leaving 52% Finnish citizens. The gender ratio was evenly divided between women and men. (Anonymous, 2016a)

As the spirit of the event is to keep it casual, it is reflected in the volunteer's dress code. All volunteers are to use during their shifts the Slush volunteer t-shirt to show that they are currently working and are a part of the community. When volunteers are wearing the Slush t-shirt, the attendees assume the volunteer to be working a shift, so anyone can come and ask questions or advice from them. To many volunteers one of the value-adding factors is the Slush volunteer t-shirt as they are only intended for the Slush volunteers and have unique prints specifically for the volunteer t-shirt. Some teams might have a special Slush Swag or merchandise to set them apart from other teams, for example the Info team has different unique t-shirts with 'Info' written on their shirts and special beanies. Slush Buddy team (previously known as the Concierge team) has previous years had a blazer as a part of their outfit as they have been hosting high-profile guests. The blazer

has been a troublesome outfit extra that has been debated over as it sets the Buddies apart from the other volunteers and breaks the casual dress code otherwise known in the event. The startup community is known for mainly dressing up in hoodies and having a laid-back style.

Slush has been described by one of last year's volunteers as "Mind-blowing, unforgettable, magnificent". (Anonymous, 2016b) Most of the feedbacks from last year had positive words describing the event. In the feedback form many of the volunteers describe how they have gained many different kinds of experiences at this event. Not only do they get a valuable volunteer experience but also for example new friends, life skills, challenging themselves, experience from working in a team with members from different backgrounds or other countries. Many volunteers have told that they have applied to be a volunteer to gain experience and knowledge of the tasks they are responsible for.

As the working language of Slush is English it is vital for the volunteers to be able to help the international guests and use their English skills even if they are shy of using it. Luckily Finns are some of the best English as foreign language speakers, so this hasn't been a problem in Slush. (Supperi, 2015) All trainings are held in English and it is encouraged that the group language should be English. Each group should have at least a few people who are not native Finnish or Finnish-Swedish speakers, so that the group already in advance has a mindset of the communication being in English. In 2017 there were a few cases where volunteers felt excluded from their group due to the language switching to Finnish. These cases were processed as soon as the information reached the People team and the excluding behavior gone through with the group.

Volunteers must be treated as good as possible. Slush offers every volunteer one hot meal during their shift. Besides this there are various different snacks provided by sponsors at the volunteer area. Last year there were muesli bars, chips, fruits, chewing gum and some savory pastries. Besides these there were soft drinks and energy drinks at the volunteer area. All volunteers and only volunteers are welcome to the Volunteer area. All volunteers also gain access to the event itself when they aren't working so they automatically have access to the afterparty of the main event. The afterparty has free beverages and live performances. This has previous years been one of the highlights of the volunteer program and event for many volunteers who may not find the talks or other content of the event so interesting.

Slush is a great place for volunteers to network. It is easy for volunteers to find others that are like-minded and eager to meet new people. Between the volunteers there is already a

pool of various talents eager to get their hands dirty and are motivated to work for a cause they are inspired by. This networking isn't restricted to only the volunteers but also continues in the event as well as at the Slush Afterparty. The Slush afterparty is open for all attendees and volunteers that are not at the moment on a shift. If they aren't on duty during the afterparty, the volunteers are free to mingle, join interesting conversations and network with the attendees. Some volunteers are already during the event in close contact with the attendees. They might already start their networking then. For example, the members of the Slush Buddies team, a concierge for a high-profile person that might need help during the event due to their busy schedule, are bound to spend plenty of one on one time with their person. Since Slush respects casual but firm, the volunteers are of course allowed to already then network as long as it doesn't interfere with their work or the visitors experience.

All volunteers receive a work certificate for the work effort poured in during the event. The certificates double for some educational institutions as a proof of their hard work and may result in receiving study credits. Being a Slush volunteer has brought work opportunities to many of the volunteers during past years. Companies have proven to appreciate the Slush volunteering. In some cases, this has led the companies to become sponsors of the program or otherwise hoping to cooperate with Slush.

## **2.7 Characteristics and Benefits of Volunteering**

On a more general level, volunteering has proven to be beneficial in many different perspectives. Volunteering has been shown to hit the humans compassion sensors within their brain. Seeing someone do good for others triggers within us the will to do good and feel rewarded as doing so. (Rosenthal, Baldwin & Baldwin, 2015) It has been shown to protect a person from isolating from the society and especially working as a healthy path for young people at risk. Especially important for volunteers is doing and being a part of the volunteer community. (Bridges Karr, Meijs & Metz, 2014) This makes the volunteers feel a sense of belonging in the community which also makes them want to work their best. Volunteering has also been proven to boost self-confidence and exceeding the expectations.

Kansalaisareena ry has done a lot of research on volunteer work in Finland. The research 'Vapaaehtoistyön tekeminen Suomessa' (eng. Volunteer work in Finland) on volunteering has been done in 2010, 2015 and most recently in 2018. The research statistically represents the Finnish adult population. (Rahkonen, 2018)

The research shows that the ratio of men and women doing volunteer work is divided evenly between the different sexes. Women were found to be a little more active with a little over 17 hours of active volunteer work in the past 4 weeks while men had a little over 13 hours. For women the hours in had remained the same whereas for men the decline was notable, dropping 5 hours from the 2015 survey.

The most active volunteer quota with over 27 hours during the past 4 weeks was found to be young people from 15 to 24 years old. This age group certainly had a huge difference to 2015 when the activity was only a little over 10 hours per week. Volunteers between 25 to 34 years had in 2015 still over 21 hours per week whereas in 2018 the same age group had only 14 hours.

This age group was reflected in the participants occupation, as students did volunteer work over 25 hours per four weeks. Again, the difference to the 2015 research showed a rise for students with 9 hours. University students volunteering showed a decline going from 20 hours in 2015 to only 11 hours in 2018. University of applied sciences students kept their hours the same with approximately 22 hours and were the most active volunteer student group both research years.

The survey asked the student participants should their institute would allow to do volunteer work during school hours or as a part of their studies would they be interested. In 2015 students were more open to the idea, with only 8% hesitant and 78% interested. 14% could not say whether they were interested or not. In the 2018 research 20% were not interested, 76% interested and 5% could not say whether or not they were interested or not. Women were more open to the suggestion with a majority of 96% interested in 2018. In 2015 this number was 86%. Men were more hesitant with only 58% open for the idea in 2018 and 71% in 2015. A remarkable 34% of men were against the suggestion in 2018 while in 2015 it was only 12%.

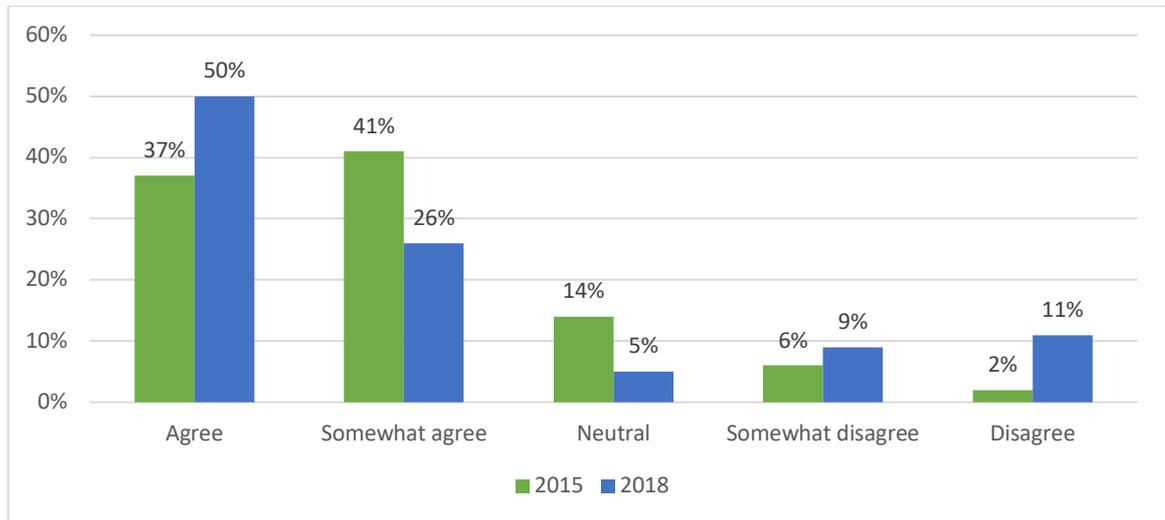


Figure 8. Student's interest in doing volunteer work during school hours or as a part of their studies. (Rahkonen, 2018)

By far the most common reason for not volunteering in both 2015 and 2018 was not having enough time. The second most common answer with only 15% in 2018 and 13% in 2015 was not being asked to join. Other common answers were: this does not interest me, health reasons, other and cannot explain why didn't volunteer.

During the past four weeks before the research was conducted, 16% of the research participants had volunteered in event coordinating or practiced the role of an official at an event for example in sporting events. This was the fifth most common volunteer cause out of 38 different causes. Only 35% of the participants had found that volunteering has been beneficial in their work lives. 29% remained neutral on this subject and 36% disagreed.

### 3 Motivational theories

In this chapter I will be going through the motivational theories I chose for this thesis. I saw these theories being most fit for the millennial era.

#### 3.1 Motivation

There are plenty of motivational theories and research done on motivation. Motivation is a driving force, which makes a person do something. Ryan and Deci think that motivation is highly valued due to the effect it has in a person to do something. Where there is motivation, there are results. (Ryan & Deci, 2016)

There are different kinds of motivations. Underneath I will be opening intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a motivation that comes from within, whereas extrinsic motivation is a kind of motivation where the person is motivated by external goals.

Research shows that motivation and engagement have a strong link to being productive. Very motivated people are 16% more productive than others lacking the passion for the company and 32% more engaged to the company they work for. (Frantti, Brink & Niemi, 2016)

Donating time and skills to make a difference has according to research been the biggest and most powerful motivator for volunteers. If they believe in the cause, it makes the volunteers feel that their time is worthwhile. (Rosenthal, Baldwin & Baldwin, 2015)

### 3.2 The Self-Determination Theory

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivational theory by Edward L. Deci and Richard Ryan. SDT is formed by three components, *autonomy*, *competence* and *relatedness*. These all stand for a need that when satisfied motivates a person. According to the theory, the biggest factors in creating inner motivation, intrinsic motivation, are autonomy, relatedness and competence.

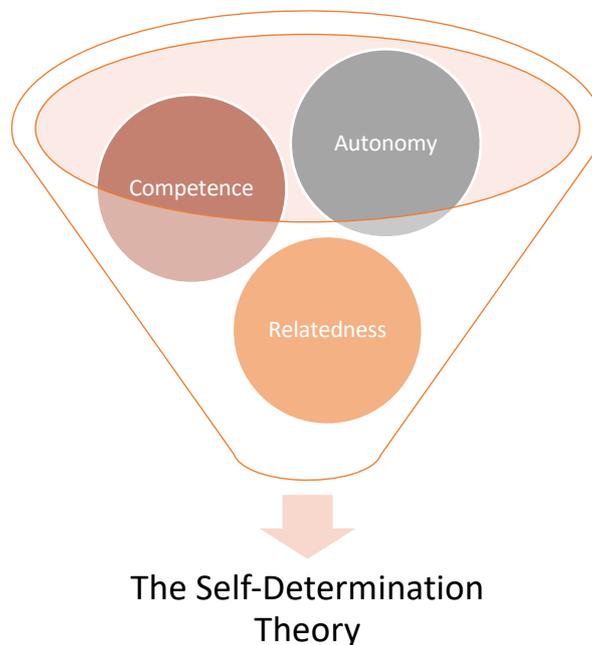


Figure 9. Needs of a person according to The Self Determination Theory. (Ryan, Deci, 2016)

Autonomy is to have control over their life. This means being able to steer their own lives and being able to do enjoyable things. Autonomy in this case doesn't mean to not need others.

Competence is to master a specific talent and be able to perfect that skill if wanted.

Relatedness means to be connected with others, to be in a community, have affection and close relationships.

Intrinsic motivation is a part of Ryan and Deci's Self Determination Theory (SDT). Intrinsic motivation means that the person is motivated to do something for their own satisfaction or joy instead of the rewards that may follow the action. Ryan and Deci claim that nothing affects a person as much as their intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic means it comes naturally, for example humans are curious and the feeling of satisfaction coming from finding something is what intrinsic motivation leads to. This means when a person is intrinsically motivated on what they are working on, they are more likely to enjoy what they are doing. To get to this point the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness need to be satisfied. (Ryan, Deci, 2016)

Since most of what humans do is not intrinsic, there is also the extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation spurs from the outcome of an action. This means the persons goal is somewhere else than in their work itself. Extrinsic motivation differs from intrinsic motivation by the action or work not being satisfying but the outcome of it is. Easy examples of this are rewards or praise for the work. Extrinsic motivation depends on how autonomous the work is. An example from Finland would be choosing to study Swedish in school because it is valuable to the person (intrinsic motivation) versus someone pushing you to study the language (extrinsic motivation). (Ryan, Deci, 2016)

In research on motivations in education (Niemi, Ryan, 2009) intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have shown to do work as powerful motivations with the difference that intrinsic motivation was shown to affect positively to the persons health. Extrinsic motivations on the other hand was shown to rupture the physical and mental state of a person. Autonomy was suspected to be one of the biggest reasons behind this. Since the person cannot control the situation, it pleases them less.

### 3.3 Mastery, Purpose and Autonomy Theory

Daniel Pink (Pink, 2009) has taken much of the SDT as a base for his motivational model introduced in the book Drive. Pink has understood that SDT is based on certain human needs instead of actions and had adjusted the needs of the theory to autonomy, mastery and purpose.

Autonomy has remained the more or less the same. Mastery means people aren't limited and can continue to improve their skills in a set talent. Purpose is having a greater cause to contribute to and to do things with purpose at work and in life, which according to Pink, this is why companies have an especial focus on purposes nowadays.

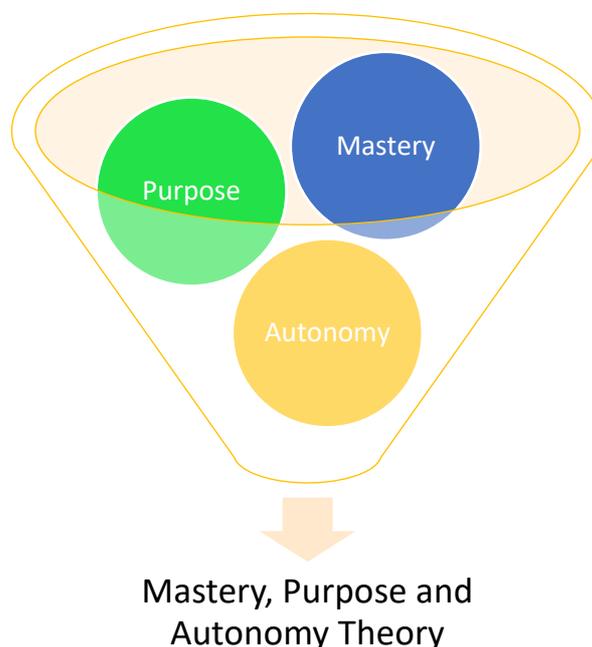


Figure 10. The basic needs according to Mastery, Purpose and Autonomy theory. (Pink, 2009)

His research is founded on studies done by Edward Deci and Harry Harlow. These studies, that have been repeated with same consequences multiple times, show that not all are motivated by rewards, such as money, but on the contrary may even fail the task if the task is unfit to their needs.

Pink believes that his theory is much more suitable for today's work life and motivations, than previous 'carrot and stick' motivations. Carrot and stick mean that as the person does something well, they are rewarded for it and if they do not succeed, they receive stick for their actions. The carrot and stick are a part of a previous motivation model called Motivation 2.0 and have been proven to suffocate some of the needs, which then causes the

work effort to go down. Pink's theory leans on 'Type X' and 'Type I' behavior. Type X means using extrinsic motivation while Type I uses intrinsic motivation. He writes of Motivation 3.0, as an upgrade from previous motivational theories and welcomes new theories to the 21<sup>st</sup> century work life. He believes more companies should use Type I behavior as this is the behavior younger people respond the best to. Pink, however does not rule out entirely benefits or rewards from good work. They just shouldn't be the motivator necessarily and could be something simple like a detailed feedback. If rewards are a part of the work, they should not be as a sign of success and should be scattered evenly but unpredictably for the best effect on the person.

## 4 Research Approach and Methods

This chapter presents to the reader the approaches and the methods of the used in this thesis. In the beginning the used methods and reasons for them are explained.

### 4.1 The Research Approach

Research methods are split under two major areas, qualitative research having a smaller more in-depth research with fewer participants whereas quantitative is focusing more on the bigger picture with more participants and relies more on the statistics. The questions asked in qualitative research are open questions which start often with descriptive questions like 'what' and 'how'. This enables the participant to open their response more for the researcher. Quantitative research relies more on close-ended "yes" or "no" answers. (Saldana, Leavy & Beretvas, 2011) This interview style was chosen because it reflected the individuals' thoughts and views of the subject instead of a larger representation. (Saldana, Leavy & Beretvas, 2011) This allowed the most detailed and personal experience of the participant.

For the research theoretical framework, I chose to combine the theories of SDT and Mastery, Autonomy and Purpose. In my research these basic needs were often reflected in both volunteering and millennial motivations and values. I believe that by using these needs I will find out the most equivalent answers from the participants.

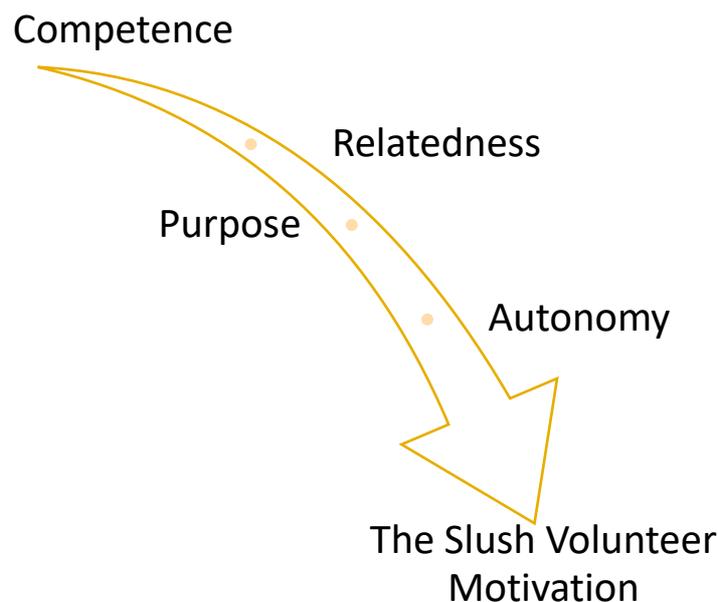


Figure 11. Reaching the Slush Volunteer Motivation through the combined theories used in the theoretical framework in this thesis.

The respondents were chosen from the Slush 2017 volunteer pool due to their recent experiences and most relevant comments on the research question. The subjects for the questions of the thesis were built on the most acute questions of how to motivate volunteers at Slush. The participants of the research were chosen due to their diverse background but still narrowing the participants as the thesis would have expanded too much if all teams and backgrounds would have been represented.

## **4.2 Data Collection**

The interviews followed a series of questions divided in different sections, but the interview sessions were informal and followed a semi-structured interview style with a more discussing style around the theme. This allowed for some more detailed follow up questions in the situation if needed. This enabled us to go deeper into the subject with some of the participants. The interview frame is included in appendices.

The interview questions are a crucial part of how the participant views the situation they are in. To make the participant feel comfortable the questions must avoid words they are not familiar with and be as clear as possible. Forming the questions plays a role. The host of the interview must start with more general questions and follow-up with more specific questions, for example gradually entering more sensitive questions. Asking different kinds of questions helps the interview be as diverse as possible. Good qualitative questions start with descriptive words, such as 'Give me an example of...' or 'Tell me about a time when...' and continue as open questions. These questions lead the participant to answer with their own perspective and experience. To prevent biased answers leading questions should be avoided. The researcher should not feed the participant with assumptions in the questions. Questions with multiple parts should also be avoided. 'Yes' and 'No' questions are not a part of a good qualitative interview and should be rephrased to fit the requirements earlier mentioned. (Merriam, 2009)

In the thesis the interviews are divided in sections according to the topic they are related to. This way the different opinions and thoughts of the participants of the interviews were easy to be compared with each other. The questions are attached in the appendix.

## **4.3 Executing Interviews**

The interviews were executed during fall of 2018. They were conducted as individual interviews. All together there were five participants. The participants were found through my connections to volunteers at Slush, from the volunteer pool. The participants were chosen

specifically from the 2017 volunteers to get the most recent opinions and accurate results to prevent biased data. Before executing the interviews, I went through the questions with a partner and made changes where I saw them needed.

I reached out to the participants a week before the set interviews. I let them know that I was interviewing volunteers from Slush 2017 for my thesis and explained that during the interviews we would discuss their experiences. I mentioned that their names would not be shared in the thesis. A few of the people I reached out to were aboard or occupied during the time and could not participate but everyone I reached out to were excited and eager to share their view on the subject. The interviews were on consecutive days on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of November. I kept a few hours in between to reflect to the interview and make notes. I found it easiest for me to do the interviews in a row with three interviews on the first day and two on the second. This made it easiest for my analyzing and with the interviews still fresh on the mind it was easy to reflect as a whole to the interviews.

The interviews were held in calm and silent cafes, where we could talk in peace without interruptions. The cafes were recommended by the participants when I asked where they would be comfortable to execute the interviews. During the interviews I tried to maintain a calm, supportive and positive attitude towards the answers. As the interviews were semi-structured interviews, they made additional questions and specifications easily possible. I made notes on the computer and had backup voice recording from the situation. They lasted approximately from 25 minutes to 1 hour and 14 minutes.

The participants seemed to enjoy telling their side of the experience. They thought that it was a valuable research topic since the volunteer program still has many factors that could be done better. I was very happy with how the conversations went. Everyone was happy to answer the questions I had prepared but also any other more in-depth questions I may have had.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

The data analysis is based on the interpretation of the participants answers provided to the researcher of the thesis in the interview situation. The ethics of research are kept in mind throughout the analysis. Therefore, the conclusions may be biased due to many different factors. The questions asked may be wrong for the interviews and may miss a point as well as the answers not being what is searched. The participant may be lying in the situation and therefore falsifies the data analyzation.

For the reliability and diversity of the thesis I have used sources from Finland and abroad. These sources include literature such as books, articles and research papers, especially from the Kansalaisareena platform and their Jeesaan -project, but also web pages and online articles. I spent a fair amount of time getting to know the sources and motivations of millennials and the reasons behind it. All sources are from within 10 years, but majority being from after 2015.

The quality of the interview was fine-tuned until the very end. The interview had been tested in advance. The interview situations and path were the same, with a few specification questions. The interviews were held on following days which eased my job in analyzing the results. The analyzing was supported by the notes from the situation as well as the record of the interviews.

As the number of volunteers in the event is massive, I preferred to have only a few interviewees to get a broad but deep perspective to the minds of the volunteers. This is why I chose to interview 5 volunteers, it still seemed like a manageable amount yet still enough to get a good glimpse into what the volunteers think. I chose volunteers from different levels of volunteering to make sure all relevant groups were represented.

The data was analyzed by following the path of data reduction, then data display and lastly conclusion drawing. These steps help the mind not fall into data overload and help to keep the data collected in an easier readability. (Walliman, 2011)

I started the process with transcribing my interviews. There were 32 pages of content, which I read through multiple times before taking the next steps. I then started data reduction by coding, which is to organize the data into groups with labels. Especially focusing on pattern coding, which helped group the different individual patterns, making it easier to compare the answers. I began writing the results within a few days after the interviews.

## 5 Results and Discussion

The chapter presents to the reader the results of the interviews made from the year 2017 volunteers.

### 5.1 Interview Results

The interview results will compare what the participants have told and analyze the answers. The questions were grouped according to the themes they were a part of. I will be analyzing each theme under its own subchapter. The questions with the motivational theories' needs are in the appendix.

#### 5.1.1 Background of Volunteers

The interview participants chosen were seen as they represent a diverse background. All volunteers participated as volunteers at Slush 2017. The participants were between 20 and 26 years old. All respondents had at least one year of volunteering experience at Slush. Three participants had more than one year volunteering experience at Slush Helsinki. The gender ratio of participants was 3 women and 2 men. Four of the participants had experience of volunteering in other events or societies in addition to volunteering at Slush. The participants were different level volunteers in the Drivers Team, Speakeasy, two from the Slush Buddies Team and one from Construction Team. The reason there are two participants from Slush Buddies team, is due to finding out how the different commitment levels of volunteering see the situation. The Slush Buddies team is one of the biggest volunteer teams and was so a good candidate for reference.

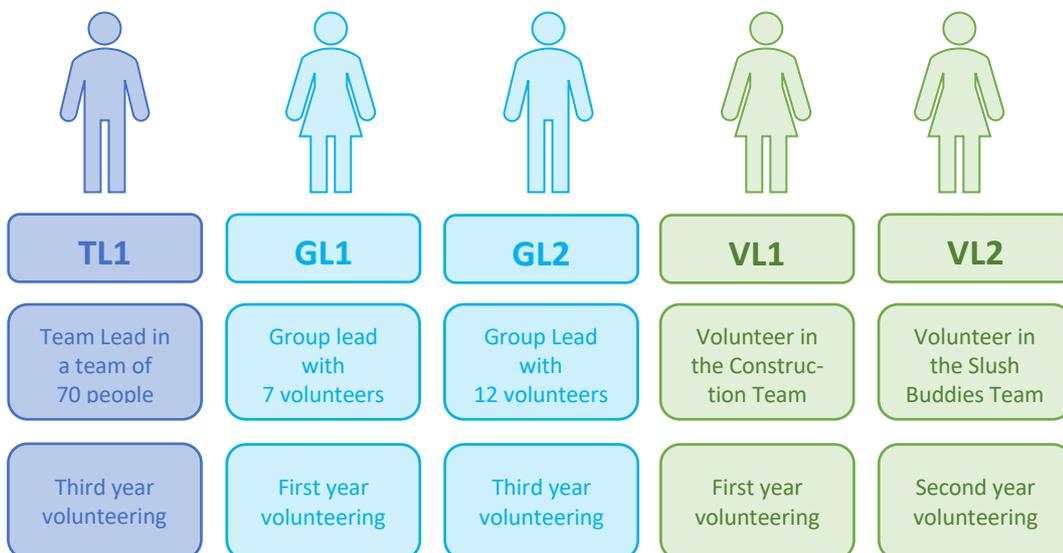


Figure 12. The participants team info and years of volunteering.

TL = Team Lead  
GL = Group Lead  
VL = Volunteer

### 5.1.2 Reasons for Volunteering

In this series of questions, I solved what the reasons for volunteering are and how did the volunteers end in the teams they chose.

Participants views on what factors build up to the feelings they had during volunteering were quite similar. Being a part of an amazing event for a few days and making it possible was mentioned by all.

“It’s amazing. A speaker I hosted put it well: Slush is a lot better than Web Summit because it’s not about business, it’s more like a startup festival.” (GL2)

Four of the participants felt they were a part of something bigger than themselves. Many of the participants referred to team spirit and community having a big role in how fun they perceived the event and experience to be.

Three of the participants had previous experience in volunteering elsewhere. VL1 had volunteered before in multiple organizations and was passionate about volunteering. She had done more volunteering for non-profit organizations that help people whereas her input at Slush was more on a physical as a part of the team she was in.

“I think volunteering in Slush is similar to volunteering in different events. So even now I’m part of a club that organizes different events for master students so it’s very similar to that in certain aspects, but I think when you volunteer for Slush you don’t get to choose so much what you do or have a creative impact or like you’re given tasks and you just execute them. Maybe that’s the difference I see in volunteering for other organizations.” (VL1)

GL1 had volunteered as a coach in sports and said it wasn’t comparable to volunteering at Slush as it’s more competitive and is on a long term whereas Slush volunteering is a short-term position. She did feel that both offer similar success feelings in different ways. In sports it’s from the team winning a competition and at Slush it was the feeling when things were going well. GL2 had volunteered at events for his student union but couldn’t compare his experiences with volunteering at Slush.

Slush brand was viewed as very youthful, well known, sustainable and entrepreneurial. Four of the five participants felt the brands view resonated in them and they are proud to be a part of it. GL1 admitted that the brand and the fuss around it especially in the Helsinki region is what originally got her interested in volunteering. VL1 questioned has the event lost its focus and changed too much as a result of that. She felt the event was different nowadays with the massive growth and has lost the intimacy.

Four of the participants felt like they made a difference by donating their time and skills. They especially credited the thank you's they had received during and after the event from attendees, speakers and other staff, as a big factor in how they felt about it.

“It's super special, because these are people at this stage, I would never imagine meeting or actually to have proper conversations with, so I do value it highly.” (VL2)

VL1 thought of her position as more of a physical position and therefore didn't feel as a part of a bigger picture necessarily. TL1 considered it easy to make a difference at Slush, especially as a team lead.

### **5.1.3 Volunteer Teams**

This section handles the participants views on the functionality of the teams and trainings.

When choosing the team to volunteer in, every participant had clear but differing views what they wanted. VL1 the most pressing factor was to be able to attend the event itself and not be working throughout it. VL2 chose her team because she'd get to make such a personal connection with the guests and see the event from a different perspective. GL1 was interested in the concept of their station and wanted the task to be something that she was useful in and would require hands on doing. GL2 wanted also to feel useful and found the team the most interesting. TL1 chose his team because he wanted to take as much responsibility as possible and thought that the team wouldn't have such a competition on the team lead position.

Four of the five participants felt that they were prepared and comfortable for the upcoming event based on meetings with their group or team leads and the volunteer trainings organized by Slush. VL1 didn't feel the trainings were so important for the construction team but liked that the trainings brought the team a bit more together. VL2 explained that her visions of the training were much influenced by her being a group lead the previous year

and therefore everything felt familiar already. TL1 saw the trainings as more of a way to get into the right mindset for the event and get the journey started.

Most participants felt their team leads kept them well aware and updated on current events. All participants said they didn't hesitate to ask for help or information from their lead. GL1 said her team lead was under a lot of pressure as the station they were running was new and the team lead had a lot of responsibilities. She felt that had the team lead involved the group leads better in the process it would've saved them from many of the mistakes that happened during the event. The holding of information reflected to GL1 not being able to train the volunteers the best she could. As a first timer at Slush, she found support from her peer group lead, who has been multiple times as a volunteer and knew somewhat to expect. TL1 felt that there was a lot of independent work in familiarizing himself with his role. His team link directed him to talk to the previous year's team lead to understand this role. TL1 felt that his team link was not his closest contact in the organization, but he got support from others in the team. He was thrilled to have the freedom to do whatever he wanted within the main frame.

In addition to the organized volunteer events like Talkoot and Volunteers Day, the participants said their teams met up two to three times as guided by the Slush at the Leadership Experience sessions. The participants described the meetings to have been quite casual and laid back. Group leads said they met with their team leads also two to three times with the other group leads in the team. All participants felt that the meetings beforehand helped build the team spirit and bonds.

"We did a lot of partnering with another GL and I think it was a good idea and it worked well because we got to do so many different kinds of exercises and volunteers got to meet much more people than just me." (GL2)

Team spirit was overall described to be good. All except one mentioned having a few people who would not do their tasks as asked. Especially VL1 mentioned that in the construction team there were difficulties in having the team come for deconstruction since everyone was hungover from the previous night's party. VL1 however did feel that especially before the event the team spirit was very good. VL1 mentioned that their team had very much independent work but also, they were assigned to different shifts which didn't help in creating the team spirit as they weren't working together. When asked from VL2 how she felt about being a part of a team but actually doing so much alone she said it felt good. The support network from the team worked if there was a problem. Otherwise she said the team spirit was there when at a backstage she'd see another Slush Buddies team

member and they'd smile and realize they're in the same situation. GL1 felt that the team spirit was good but some of the volunteers later proved out to be there for other reasons and didn't show for their work. She didn't feel prepared to react in the situation, especially when their station was very busy. TL1 had a very good team spirit throughout the different structures from volunteers to team link. Especially with his group leads he felt a good connection since they were working intensively together at a special headquarters for their operations. The volunteers would visit the headquarters every now and then also.

Many of the teams had multiple communication platforms. All participants were using either WhatsApp or Telegram for communication with their group but also three of the five were using Slack in addition. All teams used Google Docs to share files. VL1 pointed out that after Slush, there was still some activity, but it died out quickly.

The volunteer community was perceived as open, like minded and helpful.

“Fun and also the people, I've never been in such a community where everyone is so interested in each other as well, so it's not competitive even if it could be. It's so important for me that it doesn't feel like a competitive team but more as supportive. Everyone is cheering each other and if someone does a good job, they really tell others about it and stand proud by what they've done. This makes it feel nice.” (VL2)

GL2 agreed as he described that everyone is cheering for each other. Good work is especially cheered for. The participants appreciated the volunteers being somewhat same aged, it made the community seem stronger. GL2 pointed out that the first timers are always very excited, and the excitement is almost tangible.

The participants saw the team commitments very differently. For example, both members of the Slush Buddies team had different opinions on the subject. VL2 said the construction team worked fine commitment wise until people realized their slacking wouldn't have any consequences. One of GL1's volunteers didn't use alcohol and felt excluded partially due to that. She didn't feel welcome at a gathering GL1 was hosting. GL1 then went through the situation with her and explained that she was welcome regardless if she drank alcohol or not. The volunteer ended up having a great time and enjoyed the rest of her experience. GL2 struggled also with one of his volunteers. In this case the volunteer didn't seem to understand what her task was despite attending all the team trainings. In the end GL2 and the volunteer agreed on switching her to another team where she was more comfortable. TL1 felt that his leadership was constantly on trial. He battled with how to maintain a mutual respect ensuring people will come to their shifts when everything is based on vol-

unteering. Another struggle was how to keep a leadership status when the people on the team may be older, more qualified or educated.

All participants felt that the conversation between them and their team was open. Suggestions and opinions were received well. GL1 had issues with one of the teams other GL's she worked with being too aggressive promoting the side events and partying. They had a conversation about it and felt it went civilized. Both GL1 and TL1 had noticed that there were some volunteers in their groups who were eager to suggest changes they hoped to see. Unfortunately, the suggestions were often a bit too late and nothing could be done anymore. TL1 said that in the end he was the person who had to make the decision as he knew the different variables and factors effecting the suggestions.

The Slush volunteer swag, such as the t-shirts, were seen as a bonding element amongst the volunteers. Participants felt it made even for them spotting the working volunteers easier during the event. GL1's volunteers had been expecting the volunteer t-shirts since the first meeting they had and were very excited about them. Some had been collecting the t-shirts for years now. GL2 shared the same thoughts and said volunteers feel proud to be in the volunteer t-shirt.

“Especially in the startup community wearing Slush is a good thing, people notice the brand and feel proud of being a part of that. In terms of getting swag from slush it's a great way to market themselves.” (GL2)

VL1 criticized the t-shirts and hoped there would be a recycling option for the shirts. Her opinion was influenced by a sustainability view that since it's worn only for a few days it is useless. She hoped other Slush volunteer swag distributed would also be useful on a longer run.

#### **5.1.4 Volunteer Area and Events**

The Volunteers Area clearly was a negative subject for the participants. The lack of space was the main complaint of the participants. All of the participants thought the Volunteer Area was too overcrowded and this led to them not seeing so much of the sponsors stands in the Volunteers Area also due to the queues to the stands being too long. As many of the participants thought that the Volunteer Area was a place for relaxation and to chill out, they were a bit disappointed in it. Three of the participants said that they would've wanted to sit down but the chairs were occupied at all times. GL2 said that as he'd volunteered in previous years, he preferred it in previous years with more space and less to do. VL2 had been able to take a nap but was distracted by the loud crowd.

“It was very busy, it was full of people so I’m not sure if I would’ve even wanted to lounge there. We had a little quieter back area at our spot where we could go relax for a bit and get away from the front desk we had. I don’t think I would’ve even spent much time at the volunteer area.” (GL1)

The Volunteer Area however did receive praise for having snacks and drinks at all times. All participants valued the variety of snacks.

The volunteer events were generally received as good and fun events. The social and community perspective of the events was mentioned by all the participants as a highlight. All participants understood that the point of the events was to come together as a team or community and start building the spirit from there on.

All participants thought the events official afterparty was fun. VL1 praised the good performers and free drinks but found networking too hard to be done. GL1 thought it exceeded her expectations and was very interesting having so many people from different fields talking together about issues. She valued the networking perspective. GL2 thought it’s the perfect way to end Slush, first the serious and then moving on to the fun. Both GL’s felt their volunteers were very excited of the afterparty.

The volunteer afterparty was seen as very important by all participants. Three of the participants thought that the official afterparty was enough, but this was a nice extra with just the volunteers. The participants brought up that it feels like a thank you and prize for their hard work to have one last event with just volunteers and only for volunteers. GL2 said that the party seems to seal that year’s event. GL1 said it was such an odd situation having a party in a garage and it is very unique and will be remembered afterwards and thus adds value to the event itself. She thought the volunteer afterparty was more intimate and being surrounded with likeminded people from different fields gave more than the official afterparty. The participants mentioned that most volunteers were very excited for the volunteer afterparty. VL1 questioned is it because of the student culture in Finland where parties and alcohol are very common. GL1 also suspected the student culture being a main reason that alcohol and free parties played a role in the hype volunteers were experiencing. GL1 mentioned that many of the volunteers were obviously only volunteering for the parties and that those were the best things they got out of Slush. She felt she had made it clear for all her volunteers that the parties are just an extra and they should not feel the pressure as you aren’t required to drink to mend in.

### 5.1.5 Volunteer Experience

The participants all said they felt inspired after the event. Three of them said they were extremely tired after the event as they had prepared so much for it. VL2 described the post-event feelings so that after the event you want to achieve all the things you've seen. VL1 also mentioned the created inspiration and motivation. TL1 felt subconsciously extremely relieved that the expensive rented items for the task had remained intact.

The participants said the communication between them and Slush had been very limited after the event, but they didn't expect any more. GL1 and GL2 were very glad to get back feedback concerning their work and their volunteers' opinions. Both had received very good feedback from their team. All of GL1's team had responded, but GL2's team only a few answered. Neither one of the volunteers remembered answering the feedback questionnaire. As a thank you tradition for the team working throughout the year and the team leads, Slush has organized an excursion which has took place abroad. TL1 joined the excursion and felt it was the perfect ending for the Slush project. He appreciated there being a proper ending and at that point enough time had passed by to be able to enjoy the trip.

Half of the participants seemed to value the work certificate. GL2 saw that the mention of volunteering at Slush was very good on the resume and had been asked in work interviews about the certificate and his volunteering experience. He felt that especially in startups and tech world it's a good mark. Two of the participants said they never received the work certificate that are sent to all volunteers but didn't see any use for it either. VL2 appreciated highly that her team member had written a LinkedIn recommendation to her profile praising her good work.

The AVP Leadership Experience course divided opinions. GL1 felt the context and bringing up the information was good, but she knew most of the things from working in customer service. She had respect for AVP and felt the buildup to the event through the course was good. GL2 and TL1 had participated in the sessions before and felt it was repetition of the earlier years. Both hoped there would be more updated content. GL2 felt the sessions were very much directed at the Aalto students doing the course. However, he felt it was a good way to get to know his team and they would often hang out after the event. None of the volunteers did the course but thought that receiving credits from volunteering at Slush was a great idea. The main reason for not receiving credits was that the participants weren't currently enrolled in a university or their studies were so advanced that they didn't wouldn't have benefited from the credits. I asked VL2, who had previously been a

group lead if she would've seen value in participating as a volunteer in the course. Her response was no, because she applied to be 'just' a volunteer because she didn't have the time to commit in anything more. None of the participants received credits from their volunteer work but they all thought it to be valuable, should their studies have been in that condition.

When asked about the skills and competences gained through the experience, the biggest skill was definitely networking. Four of the participants said it was the single biggest thing. VL1 felt the biggest thing in understanding the production and how much it takes to build an event like this. GL1 experienced her first leadership position and praised the leadership skills she had learned.

Overall all participants thought the event gave more than it took. Four of the five participants felt that it definitely gave more than it took.

"I don't think it took more than it gave. I mean I think the event was great and I'm happy I could participate by working for a few days. But that being said, if I now had to pay a student ticket 100€ versus working for 3-4 days and having all the extra things, I wouldn't do it anymore. It's also mainly because now I could make money and I see my time in a different way." (VL1)

GL1 felt that the tasks were simple and fun, and it didn't require her too much effort during the entire fall.

Four of the five participants would absolutely recommend Slush volunteering to friends. Again, VL1 mentioned that only if the person has time on their hands and is interested in a specific job. She felt that not working during the event but rather before or after was the best as then you have free time during the event. The main reasons why the other participants would recommend the experience were building network, putting yourself out there in a situation you're not often in, seeing things in other fields that may influence you and gaining leadership experience.

"Absolutely recommend, especially considering the growth you experience. You get a lot of responsibility and full power to do whatever you wish with big and meaningful things. It's the kind of valuable responsibility one can't even imagine achieving in a long time at work." (TL1)

Especially TL1 felt that during his volunteering he had gained a lot of leadership skills and valued having so much responsibility that wouldn't be possible anywhere else for a long time.

## **6 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Here I will be concluding the research results and recommendations based on the interviews. I will also be reflecting my own learning curve during this process.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

The aim of the thesis was to develop the Slush volunteer experience and figure out what are the triggering points that motivate the volunteers and bring them back a year after another.

Before starting this thesis, I had worked at Slush first as a volunteer and later as Head of Volunteers. I found this thesis to support and be a good reflection of the bigger picture of my work place and task. After my post ended at Slush, I also had lots of ideas on how to improve the system for next year. Thankfully Slush volunteers are very active and willing to reflect their memories from the event.

As I wrote the thesis and read through the sources and the problems presented in there it became obvious not only was this a subject to reflect at for Slush, but many other companies and organizations are struggling with defining and motivating their millennial workers. As the baby boomer's generation will retire, the millennials will take their spot in work life. This turnover will happen in a matter of years and will affect companies all over the world. Volunteering can have a great boosting effect on the young adults growing into the big boots they are expected to fill.

Research shows that volunteering in Finland has had and will continue to have a strong position in the future. An interesting change had happened in the structure when comparing the 2015 and 2018 researches. One can only wonder what has driven the number of young volunteers to get motivated in volunteering.

As a part of the research, this thesis was also presented to the commissioner. We have discussed on multiple occasions with the current volunteer operations leads on what are the biggest bottlenecks from our perspective, but this thesis revealed some truth to them from the perspective of the volunteers. I hadn't expected the team and group leads to experience such uncertainty in their role. I was also surprised that the answers were so similar amongst the participants.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The other research question of this thesis research is to provide Slush with an improved suggestion for the volunteer program. The practical results work as a support for the volunteer operations at Slush Helsinki.

The interview results seemed to support the theoretical framework as all needs were readable from the conversations. The answers of the participants reflected mostly the needs the questions had originally represented, but in some questions, another need would show to be more accurate for that question based on the answer. The participants' answers reflected the needs otherwise very clearly. Many of the volunteers thought the purpose of Slush was very valuable to them and was clearly a motivator to apply as a volunteer. They also believed their competences were challenged enough, but not too much, there was still room to grow. The community was praised many times and the participants clearly felt relatedness to it. In addition to the community, many said they had received friends through their experience, which is also interpreted as relatedness. Having freedom to execute their tasks was valued by the volunteers, which is a part of autonomy. Relatedness came up the most in the answers and had a strong position in the motivational needs of the volunteers.

I found that the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of the participants were divided. One of the participants had clearly extrinsic motivations with the only prize being a ticket to the event itself. Three of the participants were genuinely interested in the event but also volunteering and the good feeling rising from there. One of the participants I found hard to read and wasn't sure which kind of motivation drove them. The participant was very motivated by the community and feelings but expressed very clearly that the parties and events were a big reason why volunteer.

Based on the interviews I would recommend making the Volunteer Area more inviting to the volunteers. The area could be set up somewhere where there is more space to spread out. Besides the Volunteer Area being too crowded, many of the participants mentioned the lack of chairs or lounging spots and the complaint of noise in the area. There could be a separate area for snoozing and relaxing, where it'd be a bit darker and lots of beanbags. The participants also suggested a few more gaming or activity stations. This would support the problem of having too long queues. It would also make the area more inviting for the volunteers. These changes would support the feeling of autonomy to the volunteers as they would be able to decide whether or not to stay at the area instead of feeling the rush to get out.

The interviews showed that a big portion of the volunteer program that needs attention is the training of team leads and group leads. Both team and group leads had more challenges during their experience compared to the volunteers. Both expressed the need for more support in recruiting their volunteers. As many had never been in a leadership role until then, they didn't know what traits they were looking for in the volunteers. This led to recruiting volunteers that would later prove to have wrong motivations for joining as a volunteer and not showing up to their shifts for example, which would then cause the lead to be disappointed in their recruiting skills. This recruiting problem could be addressed in more depth at the Leadership Experience. Going through what to look in a recruit would give more support to the newly chosen leads. There could be a more general version of how to recruit and then a more team specific on which features in a person that team is looking for. It would also be beneficial for the leads as their competences in the subject would be reinforced and the motivation would be more intrinsic.

The leads also struggled with how to be a leader and establish it when the volunteers may be older, more educated or even more qualified. This could be addressed to the team leads by the Slush recruiting team on why this person was chosen to be in this role. It would show more support for the team leads on why they've been chosen to execute their role and therefore boosting the confidence as team leads. For group leads the team leads could then share on why they were chosen as a group lead. The AVP Leadership Experience sessions could then bring more concrete suggestions on how to deal with situations where you may not be taken seriously, or a mutual respect is lacking. The leads highlighted that as this is a volunteer run organization and everyone is a volunteer, it was hard to motivate some people into understanding that they are the leaders of the team.

The group and team leads wished for more feedback from their volunteers and team. Volunteer feedback answer rate has been very low in past years. In 2016 only 404 answers and 2017 only 314 answers out of the over 2 000 volunteers the feedback form has been sent to. My recommendation would be for the teams to gather one last time after the event to reflect on their experience and gather feedback. This would mean that the volunteers are in personal contact with the group leads and therefore more likely to fill the feedback form. The added encounter would add the sense of relatedness to the volunteers as well as the leads. It also gives the volunteers a chance to maintain relationships that they would like to.

Although the general satisfaction to communication and responsibilities between volunteers and their leads was good, there was still room to improve, as one of the group leads

felt their team lead was withstanding information and then was overworked later. The team leads should be encouraged more to delegate more freely amongst the group leads that are willing to help. This would benefit the whole team and make it a pleasant experience for all the members of the team. As this is something for the group leads willing to make a difference it would serve to the sense of competence and autonomy. The likelihood of the person being more motivated to be a part as a volunteer is high.

### **6.3 Reflection on Own Learning and Process Management**

This thesis was definitely eye opening for me. I started the basis of the thesis during my time at Slush but got my flow on writing almost a year later. In hindsight this was the perfect time to write the thesis. Still fresh on my mind, but enough time had passed by for me to realize I would've been too close to see the flaws the participants mentioned and possibly would've been hurt by some of the comments. This gave me time to see how things are done elsewhere and realize that the distance was good.

While reading the sources on the different topics I noticed myself analyzing other people and myself in situations that were a part of my research area. I realized that in conversations with people my age the topics from the sources on millennials came alive. All the problems that had been mentioned were right in front of me the entire time: more freedom, flexibility and responsibility at work, want to live a vibrant life before settling, don't own a house, car or luxury items, use products of the sharing economies, focused on wellness and sustainability. The list goes on and I found myself thinking 'Is this who we are?'

And as I came closer to my motivational research, I started thinking of the very basis of my thesis. What motivates me? Was it intrinsic or extrinsic motivations? What encouraged me to volunteer in the beginning? While writing, the focus shifted from extrinsic motivations of having a party to celebrate graduating to intrinsic, knowing how good I'd feel once it was over. The theories revealed other things to me too. When choosing the theories for this research, I was sceptic was the combination of the two theories the best after all. The interviews and my own reflection confirmed they indeed were. The reason I originally became a volunteer were straight out of a textbook example. I wanted to belong in something cool(relatedness), have a role in something I believe in (purpose), do something I know I can do (competence) and have responsibility I knew I could manage (autonomy).

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## Appendix

Question	Motivational Connection
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	
Which team were you in?	
How many years have you volunteered at Slush?	
How old are you?	
<b>REASONS FOR VOLUNTEERING</b>	
1. How would you describe the feeling you get when volunteering?	Competence
2. Could you compare volunteering at Slush to other volunteer tasks you may have had?	Competence
3. How did you feel like you made a difference by donating your time and skills?	Purpose
4. How do you feel about the Slush brand?	Purpose
<b>VOLUNTEER TRAINING</b>	
5. How well did you feel that Slush provided training for you?	Competence
6. How did you feel your team link/team lead/group lead informed you on your task?	Autonomy
<b>VOLUNTEER TEAM</b>	
7. Describe the most important factors in choosing your team.	Purpose
8. How often did your team meet up?	Relatedness
9. How would you describe your team spirit?	Relatedness
10. How would you describe the volunteer community?	Relatedness
11. Describe the team commitment, were you committed or included in the team?	Autonomy
12. How do you feel your suggestions or opinions were perceived?	Autonomy
13. How do you feel about the Slush swag?	Relatedness
<b>VOLUNTEER AREA, EVENTS AND SPONSORS</b>	
14. How would you describe the volunteer area?	Purpose
15. How would you describe the volunteer events?	Purpose
16. How important do you see the Slush afterparty is for you?	Relatedness
17. How important do you see the volunteer afterparty event is for you?	Relatedness
<b>VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE</b>	
18. Describe your feelings after the event and the experience.	Purpose

19. How do you feel the contact was after the event?	Relatedness
20. How would you describe that the experience took more than you gave it?	Purpose
21. How would you describe skills/competences provided through your Slush experience?	Competence
22. On what basis would you recommend Slush volunteering to your friends?	Purpose