



Percent
Pledge.

A step-by-step guide to
launching a VTO benefit



How to launch volunteer time off (VTO)

Volunteer Time Off (VTO) is a form of paid leave that enables employees to engage in volunteerism. VTO creates necessary space for volunteer engagement – which is critical when you consider that 95% of employees want to volunteer at work, but only 50% feel they are given time to do so.

This guide is particularly beneficial for leaders responsible for Employee Experience, People, Culture, Social Impact, and ESG/CSR. It most closely aligns with their goals to increase employee engagement and foster connection between employees and local communities.

Leading companies use the [Percent Pledge Volunteering Platform](#) to power their VTO benefit, and all our customers get a dedicated Social Impact Manager. This guide contains all the insights from our Social Impact Managers, bottled up, and made freely available to you.

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This guide gives you A LOT of detail, but it can be skimmed. Choose your own adventure!

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[Skip the steps & start your impact!](#)

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Stakeholder engagement

a Your new VTO benefit is approved!

Congrats! Skip this step.

b Your new VTO benefit is not approved.

Complete section 1, then use those inputs and these additional considerations below to get approval.

- Alignment of volunteer opportunities with your company's values or service areas.
- Alignment of volunteer opportunities with your company's geographic footprint.
- Budgetary implications of offering additional paid time off.
- Legal and compliance implications of volunteer activities.
- Identifying and establishing partnerships with relevant nonprofits.
- Developing metrics to measure the benefit's impact.
- Promoting the benefit effectively to maximize participation.
- Maintaining flexibility to accommodate diverse employee interests.
- Adapting the benefit based on feedback and outcomes.

1 Design & development

a Activity: Define your VTO goals and objectives.

Answer these questions:

- How could VTO align with our company's strategic goals?
- How could VTO increase employee engagement?
- How could VTO contribute to employees' learning and development?
- How could VTO contribute to employee well-being and colleague connection?
- How could VTO enhance our employer brand?
- How could VTO positively impact our local communities?

b Activity: Survey employees to optimize your benefit.

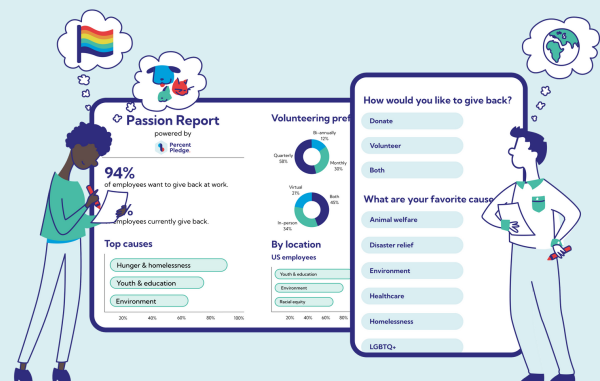
Ask these core questions:

- Do you feel it is important that our company offer opportunities to volunteer?
- Do you feel that volunteering supports your well-being and development?
- Would you like the opportunity to engage in volunteering at work?
- Do you feel you are currently given time to volunteer at work?
- How often would you like to volunteer at work? (once, quarterly, etc.)
- Do you currently volunteer outside of work today?

Do not skip this!

It is the most critical data to build your business case and get stakeholder approval.

If you'd like, we can complete your Employee Passion Assessment and deliver you a Company Passion Report. [Meet with our social impact experts](#) for this option.



1 Design & development

c Activity: Design your VTO benefit.

Here are the main details to decide on (hint, use the data you collected in previous step!):

- How many hours (days) per year? e.g. 24 hours (3 days)
- Who is eligible? e.g. only full-time employees
- What is eligible? e.g. only volunteering with registered charities (501c3 in the US)
- Any approvals required before engagement?
- Any reviews required after engagement?

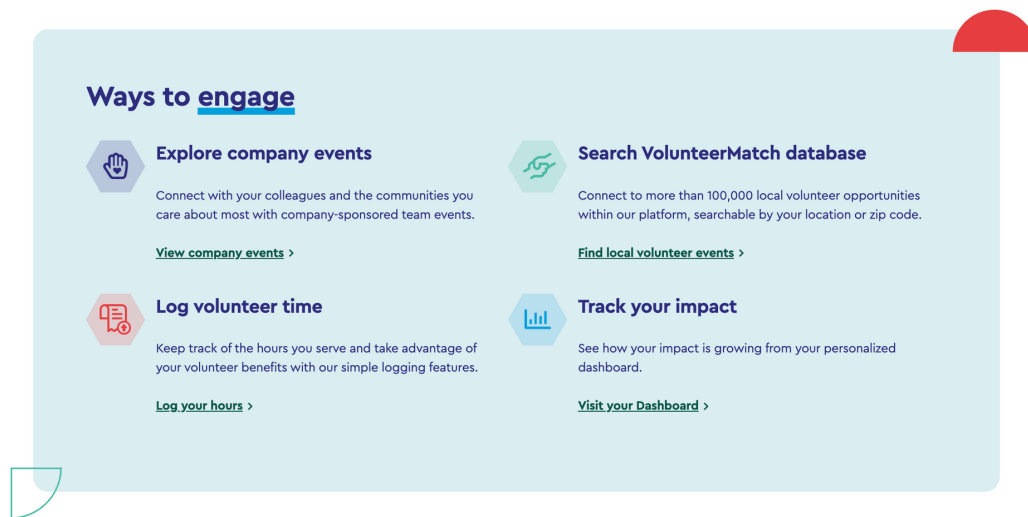
We counsel customers in the following ways:

- Be inclusive with your policy and what you count as eligible volunteer service.
- Work on a trust basis that does not require lots of proof of volunteer service beyond maybe a selfie/picture (which marketing can make fun extra use of too).
- Allow employees to use their VTO in hourly increments.

2 Implementation & employee engagement

a Activity: Build (or implement) a "VTO hub" where employees will engage.

- Some companies do something homegrown with landing pages and forms.
- Most companies implement a system like our Volunteering Platform.
- In either case, your "place" must make the following clear to employees:
 - The ways they can engage (example below)
 - The process for them to engage



b Activity: Populate your "VTO hub" with opportunities & a way to log hours.

- Providing a way to log VTO hours is usually the easy part, a simple form can suffice.
- Populating volunteer opportunities is more difficult but it is critical! Nonstop, we hear from companies that launched VTO but see low engagement because the burden to source volunteering is placed on the employee – and most don't know where to start.
- You can accomplish this DIY, bandwidth permitting:
 - Map all the locations where your employees work and live
 - Do desk research to build a shortlist of top-rated nonprofits for each location
 - Contact all those nonprofits to confirm volunteer opportunities/needs (or to organize group events to foster greater team bonding and community)
 - Post all those nonprofits and opportunities to the place you are sending employees to engage (preferably tagged by location in some way)

2 Implementation & employee engagement

b Activity: Populate your "VTO hub" with opportunities & a way to log hours.

- Strive to provide employees with variety:
 - Individual and team opportunities
 - Hands-on and skills-based opportunities
 - In-person and virtual opportunities
- This is the second main step that leads companies to turn to platforms, especially platforms pre-populated with databases of local volunteer opportunities (example below).

The image displays two screenshots of the Percent Pledge platform. The left screenshot shows the 'Find your perfect volunteer opportunity' page. It features a search bar for 'City, state, or zip code', a filter for 'opportunity type (required)' with 'In-person' selected, and a 'Find opportunities' button. The right screenshot shows the 'Log your volunteer hours' page. It includes a form for 'Charity names', a 'Hours Volunteered' input field with the number '2', a 'Log hours' button, and an 'Upload your-attachment' section for optional photos or documents.

c Activity: Configure your "VTO hub" for automated reporting.

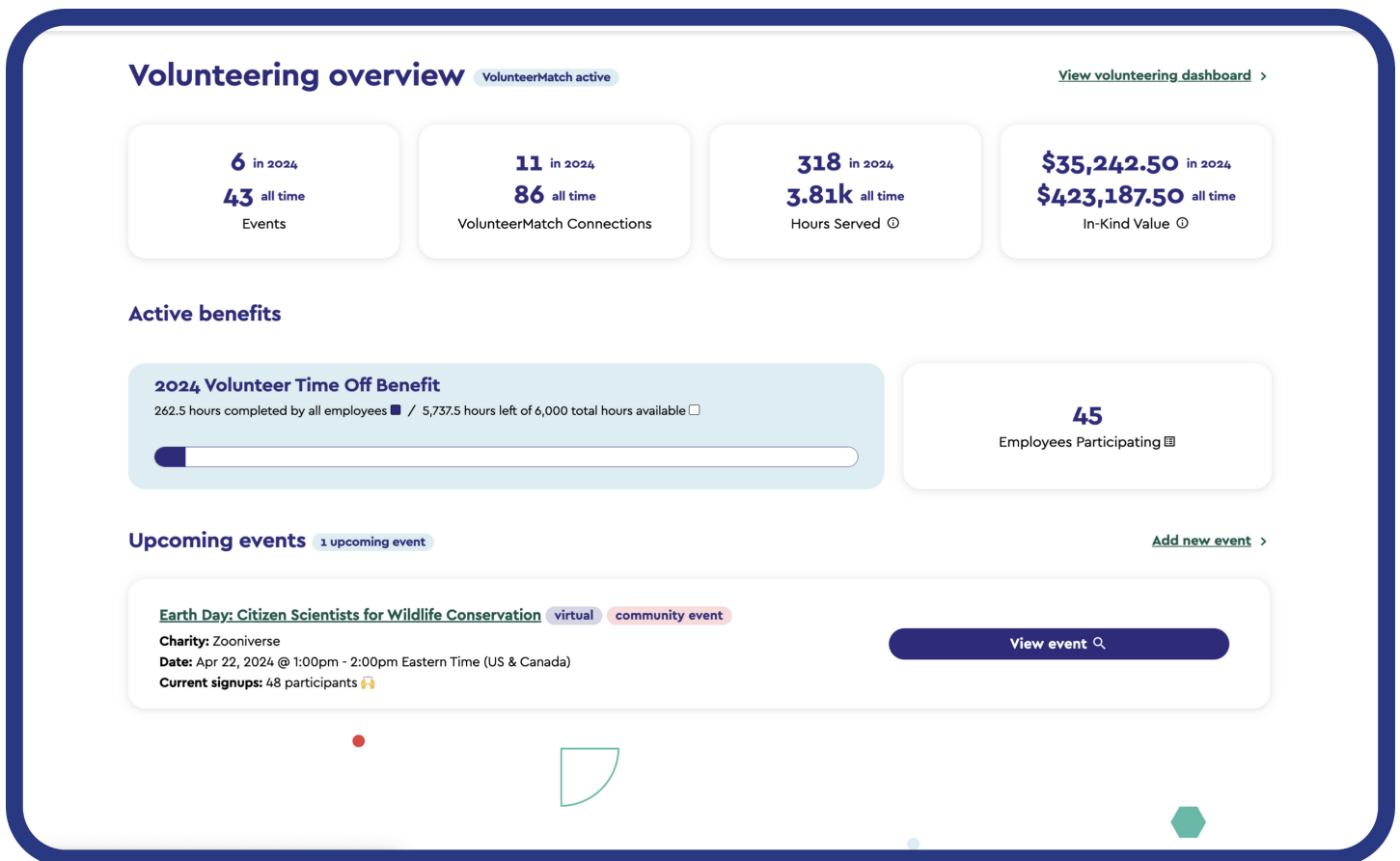
- This has to be automated. Doing it manually is painful and not sustainable.
- This has to be done during implementation, going back later is also painful.
- Without automated reporting, you will likely experience the following pain:
 - You will spend all your time in spreadsheets, always playing catch-up.
 - Your feedback cycle will be too long to effectively implement change.
 - You will have no way to market your impact (stats or stories).

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Implementation & employee engagement

c Activity: Configure your "VTO hub" for automated reporting.

- Starter quantitative metrics:
 - Employees engaged (unique count)
 - Employees engaged (percentage)
 - VTO hours served (total)
 - VTO hours served (average)
 - Charities helped (unique count)
- Starter qualitative metrics:
 - Volunteer stories/testimonials
- This is the third main step that leads companies to turn to platforms. To enhance and automate reporting with personalized Admin Dashboards (example below).



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Communication & promotion

a Activity: Create your VTO communication plan.

- Audiences (2):
 - Employees you need to engage
 - Stakeholders you need support engagement (e.g. Managers)
- Channels (3):
 - Email
 - Internal messenger (Teams, Slack, etc.)
 - Live discussions (all-hands, team meetings, 1:1s, etc.)
- Messages (14):
 - 3 emails x 2 audiences
 - 3 chat messages x 2 audiences
 - 1 set of live talking points x 2 audiences
- Messengers (3):
 - You, VTO owner (HR/People, CSR/ESG)
 - Managers or team leads**
 - C-Suite**
- Content suggestions:
 - Highlight how VTO aligns with your culture and values
 - Share the best 3 insights from your employee survey data
 - Show vs. tell how-to engage (people don't read!)
 - Bonus: message of encouragement from your CEO

b Activity: Recruit influencers to support promotion.**

- Recruiting C-Suite leaders and team leaders to support promotion and encourage engagement is a small ask to them, but a big driver of success for your VTO benefit.
- They will make employees feel confident to participate, which is critical because "pressure from my manager" is one of the main reasons employees report they do not use available VTO benefits.

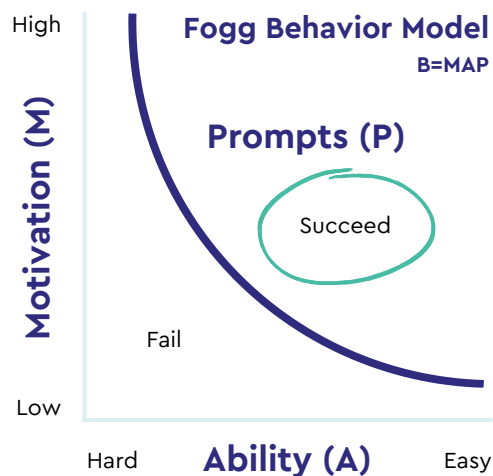
3 Communication & promotion

b Activity: Recruit influencers to support promotion.**

- Encourage team leaders and managers to lead by example by participating in the VTO program and sharing their experiences.
- Make sure they view VTO as an integral part of your company's commitment to social responsibility and community impact.
- If you start with the CEO and get them on board, the rest will follow. If you cannot do that, find 2-3 leaders who are personally philanthropic, who serve on nonprofit boards, and have them recruit other leaders for you.

c Activity: Prompt employees to engage with your communication plan.

- This step is simple but very important and often overlooked. Everything up until now got you to the starting gate, not the finish line.
- We review the Fogg Behavior Model with customers to illustrate the importance of ongoing communication and promotion.
- As shown below, Behavior = Motivation x Ability x Prompts. In the context of VTO:
 - Motivation is high – see your data or ours, employees want to engage
 - Ability is easy to do – VTO creates space for employees to engage
 - Prompts are the final missing piece to unlock your success – communicating often across multiple channels is key



4 Reporting & recognition

a Activity: Share impact reports with volunteer stories (monthly or quarterly).

Here's a simple outline for these reports:

- Impact stats
 - This section can be simply these 3 main stats from [2C](#):
 - Employees engaged (unique count)
 - VTO hours served (total)
 - Charities helped (unique count)
- Volunteer stories
 - This section can recognize one or more employees
 - Share their volunteer stories
 - Celebrate the cause they served and likely care about personally
 - Celebrate their contribution to the community
 - Think "Volunteer Spotlight" or "Volunteer of the Month"
- Charities helped
 - This section can be simply a big group of nonprofit logos, which:
 - Helps the nonprofits with brand recognition.
 - Makes it easy for employees to spot orgs they know, or find new ones.
 - Creates a nice visual of program impact and success, as the list grows.



4 Reporting & recognition

a Activity: Share impact reports with volunteer stories (monthly or quarterly).

Share these reports internally and externally.

- Internal sharing fuels your promotion and prompts new engagement.
- External sharing fuels free cause marketing and enhances employer brand.
- Sharing them promotes internal and external recognition of volunteer efforts.
- Bonus: Complete a case study with an employee and the charity they served.

b Activity: Reward employee volunteers.

Here's a list of smaller rewards:

- Volunteer Pioneer: Awarded to the first employee to log a VTO hour.
- Volunteer Evangelist: Awarded to the first employee to share about their engagement with your VTO benefit on social media.
- Volunteer Veteran: Awarded to the employee who logged the most VTO hours.
- Global Giver: Awarded to the employee who serves international causes.
- Local Legend: Awarded to the employee who serves local causes.
- Community Catalyst: Awarded to the leader who plans the first team event.
- Champion Promoter: Awarded to the leader who promotes VTO most.

Here's a list of larger rewards:

- Volunteer grant: \$\$ awarded to the employee with the most VTO hours, donated to the nonprofit of their choice.
- Team grant: \$\$\$\$ awarded to the team with the most VTO hours, donated to the nonprofit of their choice.
- Volunteer raffle:
 - One VTO hour = one raffle ticket
 - You pick X number of winning raffle tickets at the end of the year.
 - Winners get to select charities to receive company-funded donations.

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Example VTO benefit language

Example VTO benefit language:

Simple format #1:

An employee will be permitted to take [X] paid days off per calendar year to volunteer their time at a qualified charity of their choice. All requests for volunteer days off must be approved in advance and evidence of your volunteer day submitted. A volunteer day request can be made by communicating with HR. Human Resources and your Supervisor will have the authority to approve or deny the request. Volunteer hours should be logged in the Percent Pledge Platform.

Simple format #2:

[Company Name] provides every team member with [X] hours of Volunteer Time Off (VTO) each calendar year. Volunteer time must be requested in advance and pre-approved by your manager. Please submit your VTO request through [system] and log completed hours on the Percent Pledge Platform.

Volunteer time should not conflict with your team's peak work schedule and other work-related responsibilities, create the need for overtime, or cause conflicts with other employees' schedules. Unless required by law, VTO will not count toward overtime calculations. VTO hours are refreshed at the beginning of each calendar year and do not carry over from year to year.

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Example VTO benefit language

Example VTO benefit language:

Extended format:

[Company Name] recognizes the importance of community engagement and giving back. Our Volunteer Time Off (VTO) policy allows employees to contribute their time and skills to charitable organizations and community service projects while maintaining their regular compensation.

Eligibility:

All regular full-time employees are eligible for VTO.

[optional] After completing [X] months of service with the company.

[optional] Part-time employees are not eligible for this benefit.

VTO allowance:

Employees are granted [X] days (or hours) of VTO per calendar year. VTO days may not be carried over from one year to the next.

Requesting VTO:

Employees should request VTO in advance by submitting a written request to their supervisor. The request should include the purpose of the volunteer activity, the charitable organization involved, the date(s) of the activity, and the number of VTO hours requested.

Approval process:

Supervisors will review and approve VTO requests based on business needs and the employee's availability. While we encourage employees to engage in volunteer activities, approval is subject to staffing requirements and workload considerations.

Logging VTO:

Once a VTO request is approved, employees should accurately record their VTO hours in the Percent Pledge Platform (and time tracking system if applicable). This helps ensure accurate compensation and record-keeping.

Exclusions:

VTO may not be used for political campaigns, for-profit activities, or activities that conflict with the company's values or policies.

Unused VTO days will not be paid out, nor can they be carried over to the following year. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

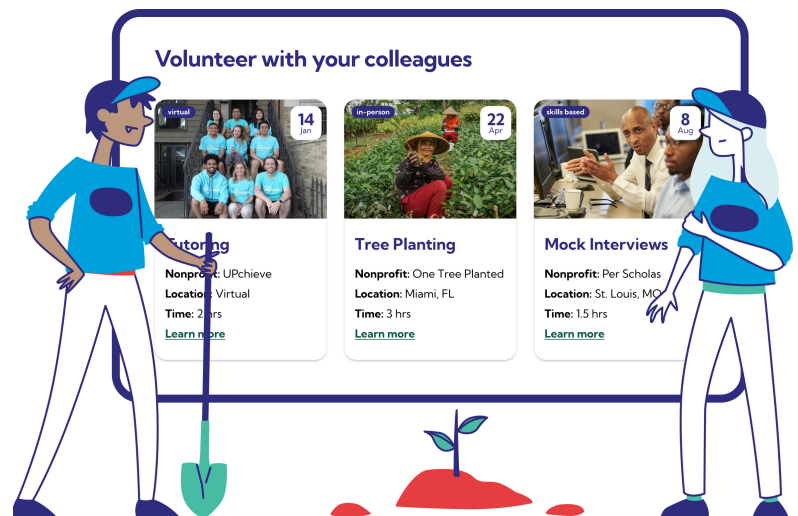
Focus on your impact, leave the tech worries to us

Feeling overwhelmed with launching your VTO program? You're not alone.

Launching a volunteer time off program involves several intricate steps and considerations. Percent Pledge is here to simplify the process, tackling the complexities so you can focus on what matters most—your employees and the communities they support.

What we take off your plate:

- ✓ Stakeholder engagement
- ✓ Employee passion & engagement
- ✓ Volunteer opportunity sourcing
- ✓ Implementation & accessibility
- ✓ Impact tracking & reporting
- ✓ Ongoing communication & promotion



[Request demo](#)

Own the success of your VTO program, not the tools you use to power it.

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For other companies looking to engage employees in volunteering, I 100% recommend Percent Pledge.



Head of Culture @ Feedonomics

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Donations, volunteering, impact reporting...Percent Pledge is the total solution!



People & Culture Manager @ Customer.io