



4-part checklist for Giving Season 2026

Plus learn how Adobe, CarMax and others ran theirs

Ask anyone who's run Giving Season and they'll tell you the real work happens weeks in advance. That's when the sponsor is locked in, the match is budgeted and someone actually tests the donation flow before employees see it. The season moves quickly once it begins, so the teams whose campaigns look effortless are the ones that did the work early. Here's what that groundwork looks like:

1 Plan and design



Set one measurable goal: it doesn't have to be growth. Holding a participation rate through a platform migration or a restructure is a goal worth naming.



Work backward from Giving Tuesday: Treat the date as a hard deadline and build the schedule behind it, so you're testing before launch instead of fixing things live.



Pick a lever that puts giving money in employees' hands: a seeded donation credit or an enhanced match makes participation a decision about where to give, rather than whether to.



Name your executive sponsor and give them a job: a sponsor who shares a personal story moves more people than one who signs a launch email.



Recruit champions where your people already are: name your executive sponsor and give them a job: ask them to share a personal story at launch.

2 Execute



Decide what role Giving Tuesday plays: starting gun, annual anchor or peak. Pick one deliberately, because defaulting to a final push the week before leaves your biggest moment unplanned.



Front-load everything you can: in the campaigns below, the first two days carried a disproportionate share of the season's result.



Put an expiration date on the offer: a credit or enhanced match with no deadline is a standing invitation. A two-week window gets people to act.

3 Manage



Report on participation weekly: A small number you see in week three is still a decision you can act on.



Build a promotion loop that runs itself: invite employees to share where they gave, and reward it. The campaign then promotes itself in the channels your people already read.



Use employee stories where engagement is soft.

4 Measure



Report final results against goal and against last season.



Report where the season took you by Dec. 31: participation, dollars, volunteer hours and nonprofit reach. Any one of them alone understates the program.



Record what you'd change and save it for next year's plan.

Giving Season at Adobe, CarMax and PagerDuty

PagerDuty

PagerDuty seeded every employee's account with a \$50 credit on Giving Tuesday, gave everyone 14 days to spend it and answered "where should I give?" with a curated giving guide. The window converted 65% of employees reaching more than 600 nonprofits. By year-end, 95% had donated or volunteered.

CARmax

CarMax moved to a new platform weeks before Care Cards, their Giving Tuesday campaign. The Community Relations team treated the date as a fixed deadline and built in time to test. More than 23,000 associates redeemed their credit, producing over US\$1.1 million for 7,000 nonprofits, at 71% participation.

Adobe

Adobe built Season of Change around a 2:1 Giving Tuesday match. Adobe senior leaders sponsored the campaign with their own stories, and ambassadors were equipped with customizable kits. The season raised \$13.5 million for 5,700 nonprofits, more than double the goal, with \$5 million on Giving Tuesday alone.

See how Benevity clients run their Giving Season

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