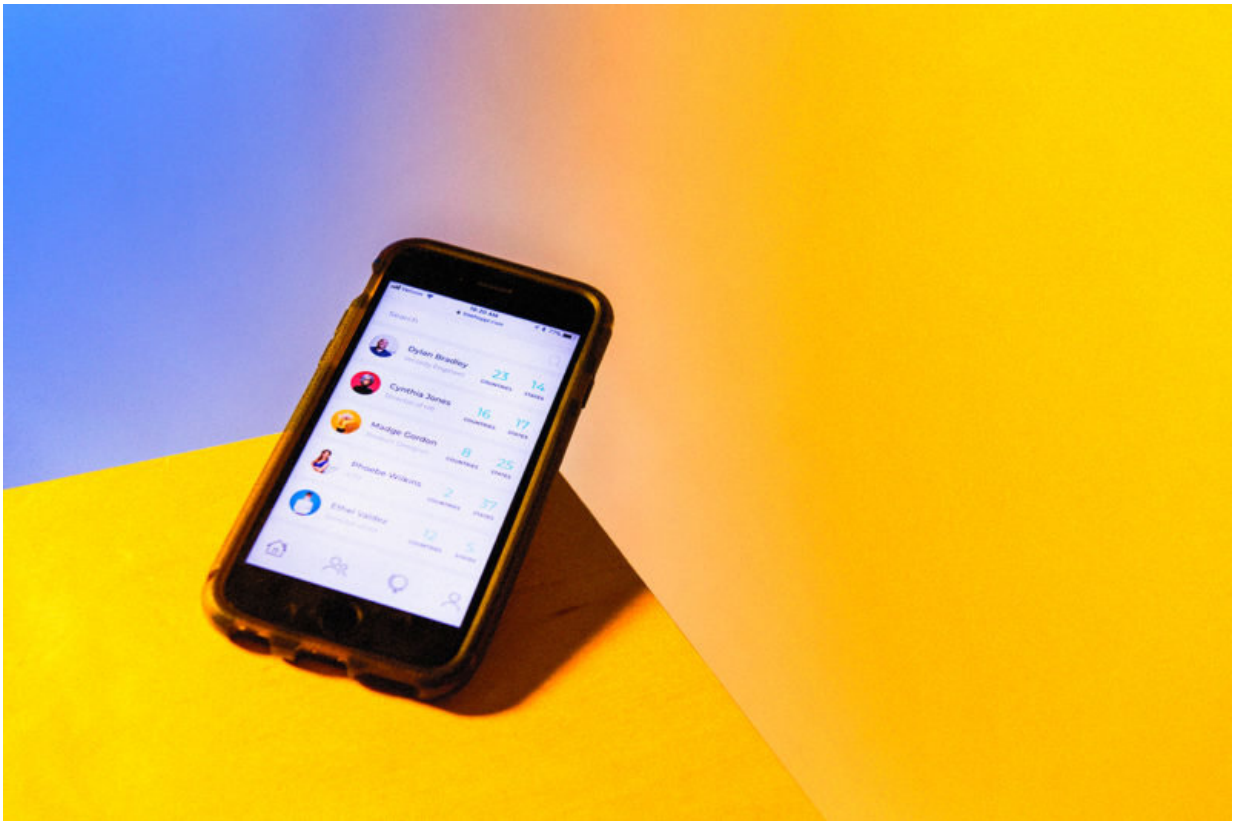


People aren't using their vacation time—here's a way to fix that

June 4 2018, by Molly Callahan



“There was this sense that you weren’t a dedicated worker if you actually went on vacation, and stopped working while you were gone,” said Kevin Corliss, founder of Treehopper. Credit: Adam Glanzman/Northeastern University

When Kevin Corliss, Christopher Kenyon, and Douglas Franklin entered

their first professional careers, they each encountered the same dilemma: Although they had earned paid vacation time, they were discouraged from using it.

"There was this sense that you weren't a dedicated worker if you actually went on vacation, and stopped working while you were gone," Corliss said.

So, the three Northeastern graduates started their own company to tackle the issue.

Treehopper, their California-based startup, is an online platform that not only keeps track of accrued time off, but offers a savings account and travel information so users can actually go on vacation.

"We want to help people eliminate these barriers to travel," Corliss said. "What are the things you always hear when you ask people about traveling? They don't have the time, the money, or the know-how when it comes to a foreign country. We want to help people solve all those issues."

The seed for Treehopper was planted in Corliss' [business](#) marketing capstone class. He knew he was onto something when he explained the idea to French friends on campus. "They just didn't even understand the problem; this is a uniquely American thing that we don't use our paid time off," he said.

According to jobs and recruiting site Glassdoor, Americans who have paid time off generally only use half of it. And of those who do get out of the office, two-thirds still work while they're on vacation.

It spells trouble for employees and employers, both. Failing to use time off is bad for employees' health, happiness, and productivity, according

to a recent study reported in Business Insider. For employers, unused paid time off represents a lump sum liability on their budget sheets.

"When a company offers paid time off, they're holding that money in the books," said Kenyon, another of Treehoppr's founders. "Imagine 30 employees leave a company on the same day. All of them need to be paid out for their unused [time](#) off, and that could be hundreds of thousands of dollars. That could sink a company."

Treehoppr aims to fix that. Employers and employees both use the platform—employers can opt to offer a savings match, and employees can set up a travel fund and plan their trip all in the same place.

Treehoppr partnered with an online banking company, which allows users to set up and manage their own financial fund within the program. Treehoppr's founders also curated a massive database of information on where to go and what to do in various countries, as well as set up software that presents users with estimated flight and trip costs.

Corliss, Kenyon, and Franklin are still testing their product. They have a handful of smaller businesses on board with plans to expand into a few larger businesses lined up.

The three Northeastern grads each bring something unique to bear. Corliss, who conceptualized Treehoppr while studying at the university, has a degree in business administration. Kenyon, the self-proclaimed "nerd of the group," studied computer engineering and computer science. And Franklin started as a business student, but switched to computer engineering.

"We're tackling core blockers to travel right at the root," Franklin said.

Provided by Northeastern University

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