

How Podium Education automated 3,000 student retention conversations with Front Autopilot

INDUSTRY
EDUCATION

COMPANY SIZE
51 - 200

Students make some of the biggest decisions of their lives while they're in college. Whether they're choosing a course, exploring a career path, or deciding whether to pursue a new opportunity, they want experience and guidance they can trust.

For Podium Education, connecting students to real-world experience so they can make informed decisions about their careers is core to the mission. The company partners with more than 100 universities – including Arizona State, Boston University, Georgetown, and University of Michigan – as well as over 50 leading employers to deliver career-connected learning experiences embedded directly into the undergraduate degree.

Through Podium's programs, students gain hands-on experience solving real employer challenges, exploring career pathways, and building skills that prepare them for the workforce. Senior Academic Operations Manager [Amy Sparent](#) has a unique perspective on that mission. "I'm an alum of one of the very first Podium experiences, so I've seen the impact of the program firsthand," she says. As Podium's network has grown, so has the complexity of supporting students across hundreds of programs, institutions, and enrollment journeys.

To help deliver personalized support at scale, Amy and the Podium team use Front as their communications hub. With [Autopilot](#), Front's AI agent, they built an AI-powered retention workflow that reconnects with students who may be disengaging from the enrollment process, helps address common concerns, categorizes outcomes automatically, and syncs critical information back to Salesforce.



The results we've seen from Autopilot have completely changed how we think about scale.

- AMY SPARENT, SENIOR ACADEMIC OPERATIONS MANAGER AT
PODIUM EDUCATION

Supporting students at scale without sacrificing personalization

At Podium, students are making important decisions about their academic and professional futures, and those interactions require individualized guidance.

"Great service is really about responsiveness and trust," says Amy. "Students want to feel seen and heard, especially when they're making decisions about their academic path or their career."

But when you're supporting students across more than 100 universities and working with dozens of employer partners, there's a tremendous amount of complexity. Every university has its own requirements, course codes, policies, and nuances, and students regularly reach out with questions about registration, program requirements, career outcomes, and university-specific details.

As volume grew, maintaining consistency while responding quickly became increasingly difficult.

Retaining student interest during peak enrollment periods

Podium's enrollment teams spend much of their time helping students understand program options and complete registration. But alongside those conversations are thousands of lower-intent interactions from students who may no longer be interested in participating.

"We market our experiences to students across our university partners, and while many students want to learn more, some respond to let us know they're not interested. Historically, someone on our team had to read those messages, categorize them, update Salesforce, then send a response," Amy explains.

The process created significant operational overhead during already-busy enrollment cycles. It also made it difficult to consistently understand why students were disengaging and whether there was still an opportunity to help them move forward.

Giving Autopilot the context to answer accurately

Autopilot helps Podium answer student questions, automate routine interactions, and assist enrollment teams with repetitive work. But for AI to be effective in a highly complex environment, it needs access to the right information.

To support students accurately across a large university network, [Podium connected Salesforce directly into Front](#). “That’s where Front has been incredibly valuable,” says Amy. “With Salesforce connected, we’re able to give both agents and Autopilot access to the context they need to provide accurate answers.”

The team intentionally applies different levels of automation depending on the sensitivity of the inquiry. “We really appreciate the flexibility Autopilot provides,” says Amy. “Some workflows are fully autonomous and don’t require any human involvement, while others are semi-automated, where AI does most of the work and a team member just reviews and sends the final response.”

Building a retention workflow that engages at-risk students automatically

While Autopilot interacts directly with students, a Playbook orchestrates the workflow behind the scenes, determining what actions should happen, when they should happen, and what information to capture.

Podium’s most impactful workflow uses an Autopilot Playbook designed specifically for student retention. When a student responds indicating they’re no longer interested in a Podium experience, Autopilot runs the Playbook to automatically analyze the message and take action. Conversations are categorized, tagged, and synced to Salesforce without requiring manual review.

More importantly, the workflow doesn’t immediately treat every student as lost. “If a student’s message suggests there may be an opportunity to address a concern or answer a question, Autopilot can respond with a gentle follow-up message,” says Amy.

For example, if a student expresses concerns about earning credits or understanding program requirements, Autopilot can provide additional context, answer questions, and encourage them to reconsider before exiting the enrollment process.

If the student still chooses not to participate, the conversation is automatically categorized and recorded in Salesforce, ensuring the team captures valuable retention data without additional manual effort.

Giving enrollment teams more time to connect with students

By automating repetitive retention workflows, Podium’s enrollment teams can focus their attention on helping students navigate enrollment decisions. That might mean staying on the phone to explain how a program aligns with a student’s major, helping a pre-med student understand how patient data projects could strengthen a future medical school application, or showing a pre-law student how data analytics skills translate to their long-term career goals.

“Automating repetitive workflows with Front Autopilot freed our team from manual review and processing, and gave them back the time to focus on the interactions that actually matter,” says Amy. “Last week alone, our team collectively spent 206 meaningful hours on the phone with students, which was possible because we used Autopilot for routine inbox work.”

Those conversations are especially impactful because many of Podium’s advisors are alumni themselves. Having completed the programs firsthand, they can share their own journeys to help students see what’s possible – in one example, a student described his experience as “life-changing.”

“Those conversations only happen when advisors have the time and bandwidth to show up for students that way,” says Amy.



At Podium, we want experiences to feel personal and timely, even at scale, which is possible with Autopilot. Students feel like they’re getting individual guidance, even as we support hundreds of thousands of eligible students across our university network.

- AMY SPARENT, SENIOR ACADEMIC OPERATIONS MANAGER AT PODIUM EDUCATION

Automating 3,000 retention conversations in under two months

After rolling out the retention Playbook across its university network, Podium quickly saw meaningful results. “In under two months, Autopilot resolved over 3,000 conversations during one of our highest-volume periods,” says Amy.

Saving more than 100 hours during peak enrollment season

Over that two-month period, Podium estimates Autopilot saved more than 100 hours of manual work. By removing repetitive administrative tasks such as reading withdrawal messages, updating Salesforce, and categorizing conversations, the team was able to operate more efficiently during critical enrollment windows.



In under two months, Autopilot resolved over 3,000 conversations during one of our highest-volume periods.

- AMY SPARENT, SENIOR ACADEMIC OPERATIONS MANAGER AT PODIUM EDUCATION

Delivering faster support for students

Because Autopilot can engage immediately, students no longer have to wait for advisors to work through large inbox backlogs before receiving guidance. “In terms of the student experience, the biggest benefit of Autopilot is delivering timely, thoughtful responses,” says Amy.

With autonomous replies, students don't have to wait until the next day, or later in the week, to get an answer. As Podium continues expanding its use of Autopilot, the team sees even more opportunities to automate repetitive work, surface insights from student conversations, and connect students with the right support at the right time.

“The results we've seen from Autopilot have completely changed how we think about scale,” says Amy. “We're not just saving time — we're giving our team the space to do what they do best: show up for students as real people, not just as names in an inbox. That's what makes this work meaningful, and that's only going to grow.”



Automating repetitive workflows with Autopilot freed our team from manual review and processing, and gave them back the time to focus on the interactions that actually matter for students.

- AMY SPARENT, SENIOR ACADEMIC OPERATIONS MANAGER AT PODIUM EDUCATION

100+

University partners

3,000+

Conversations resolved by Autopilot

100+

Hours saved during peak period