

CHECKLIST

# The Offer-to-Start Readiness Checklist



How to assess whether  
your early career  
program is renege-proof

**Abode**

# Introduction

You've already done the hard work of building your hiring plans, extending offers, and setting start dates. But then you come to the challenging interim period where candidates move out of recruiting and into a less clearly owned (or even defined) phase ahead of day one. And suddenly, things start to drift.



**We've designed this checklist to help you assess how your post-offer experience holds together in practice** — such as where engagement is strong, where coordination breaks down, how you handle handoffs when program managers leave, and where teams lose visibility during the interim period before Day 1. It'll help you address any gaps that'll improve the candidate experience, reduce manual efforts, and gain better insight into program health early enough to take action.

Sources: 1. NACE, *As Employers Push Out Time From Interview to Offer, Student Response Time Holds Steady*, August 2024; 2. Abode, *The Abode Anti-Renege Playbook*, 2025

## How to use this Checklist

Review each category throughout the checklist to help assess wins and gaps in your current program. As you go through the checklist, make a note of the checkboxes you can't tick off – these are your top-priority gaps, and will give you a better idea of where your programs need attention.

### Category 1: Program ownership

The time between offer acceptance and start date is critical for your program, because this is when ownership, handoffs, and accountability become harder to keep track of – and you still have other program priorities, too.

#### What does your ownership strategy look like?

- We have clearly defined ownership of our programs (from offer acceptance through to Day 1).
- Ownership doesn't change, and if it does, it includes documented handoffs and clear next steps.
- We don't split program responsibilities across multiple teams or people.
- Business leaders or hiring managers understand their role, and actively participate in the pre-start period (not just at offer approval).
- We educate business leaders on the importance of engaging with hires pre-start, and how it can improve renege rates and overall conversion.
- We have clear escalation paths for when/if candidates disengage or miss required steps.

#### PRO TIP

Ensure you can **identify who is accountable for every hire** you make, so you can reduce handoffs and prevent your programs from going off track.

## Category 2: Communication strategy

Little to no communication is one of the top drivers of reneges, and it's a common challenge many programs have to tackle. In our own research, we found that 74% of reneges cite poor communication as a large factor, while 91% of students want monthly contact, and 74% prefer updates every 1-2 weeks. The good news? Only 3% of students feel over-communicated with.<sup>1</sup>

### How does your communication strategy line up?

- We have a communication cadence (ex. monthly) from offer acceptance through to the candidates' start dates.
- Candidates always receive a personalized welcome message within the first week after accepting an offer.
- We provide a clear timeline to candidates that outlines what they can expect between acceptance and start date.
- Candidates have access to resources where they can determine who to contact based on their needs.
- Our communications are scheduled in advance instead of last-minute or reactive
- We learn from candidates' engagement and their feedback, so we can optimize communications and outreach (like using surveys). We use candidate feedback to help adjust our communication strategy year over year.
- We coordinate messaging and communications based on start date. Messaging reinforces program milestones, expectations, and important information candidates need to know ahead of Day 1.

### PRO TIP

**Consistency matters more than perfecting your messaging.** For example, keep a consistent email cadence beats instead of sporadic communications or elaborate messages. When silence can be taken as uncertainty, regular touchpoints will help keep candidates from renegeing. Start with a simple content calendar of 1-2 messages each month, which one call to action linking to a recent website update, resource, or LinkedIn post.

Source 1. Abode, [The Abode Anti-Renege Playbook](#), 2025

## Category 3: Readiness & Preparation

Candidates want to feel prepared before they start their role, which means equipping them with everything they need to succeed. We found that 91% of students feel a comprehensive pre-start checklist is critical, and 74% need clarity on what's expected of them before Day 1.<sup>1</sup> Sharing the right content and prep with candidates doesn't just breed confidence, but can help reduce your renege rates.

### How well are you equipping candidates ahead of Day 1?

- We provide every candidate with a pre-start checklist that covers everything they need to know ahead of Day 1, including program expectations.
- Candidates receive helpful content in advance around what to expect (such as role overviews, schedules, team structure, role responsibilities, and more).
- We share resources candidates can access on-demand (like FAQs, videos, and documentation) throughout the pre-start period.

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### PRO TIP

When candidates feel unprepared for their first day, anxiety and a lack of confidence can quickly lead to reneges, making it crucial that you provide them with all of the information and context they need. **Consider sharing a comprehensive checklist 4-6 weeks before their start date to help them prepare (and prevent last-minute reneges).**

Source 1. Abode, *The Abode Anti-Renege Playbook*, 2025

## Category 4: Community & Connection

The most underrated part of your program is the connection and community you build with candidates — and our own research agrees. 90% of students say they wouldn't renege if they felt like part of their new team before Day 1. But even more striking is that 54% of students with low engagement renege, while just 10% of renegees come from highly engaged students.<sup>1</sup>

### Is your current program helping to build community and connection?

- We help facilitate peer connections after offer acceptance (ex. directories, forums, intro emails).
- We give candidates access to community spaces where they can ask questions and connect with others in their cohort.
- We introduce candidates to their team and/or manager in advance, so they can establish clear expectations and build rapport before Day 1.
- We offer mentor or buddy pairing before the candidates' start dates.
- Candidates understand how they fit into the company and/or team they're joining.



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### PRO TIP

**To help candidates get started on the right foot, consider using peer directories or forums** where candidates can introduce themselves, ask questions, and engage with others in their cohorts. Among students who had access to a company forum on Abode, for example, 82% said they felt more connected to their peers, 77% found it a useful place to ask questions, and 75% said it helped them feel more prepared for their role.<sup>1</sup>

Source 1. Abode, *The Abode Anti-Renege Playbook*, 2025

## Category 5: Engagement Tracking & Risk Management

You can't fix what you can't see, which is why disengagement often seems invisible without the right signals or insights. The best programs work to identify at-risk candidates early, so they can intervene before reneges and other issues pop up.

### How does your current program prevent the risk of reneges?

- We track engagement consistently, from the time they accept an offer to when they start.
- We have a system or process in place that flags at-risk candidates for us, so we can identify disengagement early (ex. zero responses, declining engagement, no interaction).
- We regularly review engagement data to track signals or signs of potential reneges.
- We have a defined process for who re-engages our low-engagement candidates.
- We also communicate which candidates are at-risk with the relevant stakeholders.
- We can readily track or see which candidates have completed required tasks and which haven't.
- We've outlined clear definitions of what "low engagement" means, and when we need to intervene.



### PRO TIP

**Monitoring engagement and candidate status makes it easier to intervene when cohorts show disengagement** or potential for reneges. But tracking this manually can become messy, so having a system or platform that can help you easily track these signals — like Abode — is crucial to ensuring your programs are set up for success.

## Category 6: Technology & Scalability

It's tough to scale manual processes, but implementing the wrong solution or using fragmented tools can create serious, costly gaps where candidates and programs fail. To drive success throughout the offer-to-start period, a solution that acts as a coordination layer with your ATS, HRIS, or CRM is critical in helping you maintain real-time visibility across your entire cohort.

### Do your existing tools help or hinder your program?

- We have one, central platform to manage cohorts and candidates, including content, communications, and community.
- Our current platform lets us automate welcome sequences, reminders, and event promotions.
- We can track crucial metrics, like engagement and task completion, across our every cohort in real-time.
- Program stakeholders have access to dashboards, reports, or other insights that help track cohorts, engagement, and potential risks.
- We can easily scale our processes, from smaller cohorts to large multi-cohort programs without increasing manual effort from our team.
- Our systems integrate with our existing HR tech stack.
- Running our programs doesn't require dozens of spreadsheets or other separate, manual processes.
- Our talent leaders can quickly access reports, assess readiness, and see cohort health in our platform.
- Our technology supports peer connections (directories, forums, messaging) without manual coordination.
- Our platform offers us a single source of truth for the entire process.
- We can generate reports that showcase engagement, completion rates, at-risk signals, and other critical cohort data.

### PRO TIP

The technology you use to run your early career programs shouldn't create complexity or more work for your teams. With the **right platform working in tandem with your existing tech stack** — one that complements your ATS, HRIS, and CRM — it becomes easier to manage cohorts, monitor engagement, automate communications, and get real-time insights into your program health. Look closely at your current solution to determine whether it provides you the depth of insight you need to drive successful programs.

## Bonus Category: Program Team Efficiency

No program can truly succeed when teams are drowning in manual work and lack visibility into program health. But, when those teams are free to focus on building high-value relationships with candidates, and have the insights they need to consistently improve their programs, suddenly, efficiency feels like par for the course rather than a pipedream.

### Assess whether your program is truly set up for success:

- Our program stakeholders spend less time on manual admin tasks, like sending emails, setting up tracking, and sharing updates.
- We have templates or workflows that allow us to automate and schedule frequent communications (ex. welcome emails, reminders, event invites, and more).
- Our team can easily track which candidates have completed required tasks and which need follow-up.
- We can also easily communicate with candidates who haven't completed required tasks.
- We can onboard new program managers to our platform, and have documented processes that are repeatable YoY.
- We're measuring efficiency metrics — like time spent per candidate, automation rate, manual touchpoints, and more.
- There's clear ownership and accountability for each stage of the candidate journey.

### PRO TIP

If program managers and other stakeholders are spending hours every week on manual admin tasks that could be automated — like sending individual emails, updating spreadsheets, or chasing down insights for task completion — your program can't scale. **Leveraging the right platform that's built with efficiency in mind** will help your team automate the right tasks, so they can focus on creating the best candidate experiences.

# Five practices from top performing programs you can steal

Curious what top performing early career programs have in common?

## 1 Communication

The best programs are designed as experiences, with consistent communication, early touch points, and connections that help candidates feel support ahead of Day 1.

## 2 Content

They provide comprehensive, practical, and helpful content (like pre-start checklists) that help candidates feel prepared before Day 1 and build confidence before they start.

## 3 Coordination

Strong programs leverage integrated and scalable technology that makes it easy for teams to track the entire candidate lifecycle from offer-to-start — including real-time visibility, automating touch points, and integrating with existing HR tech.

## 4 Efficiency

Programs that drive success for both managers and candidates are the most efficient ones — and that means automating workflows, documenting processes, and always monitoring at-risk cohorts, so teams can improve and intervene before renegees become a problem.

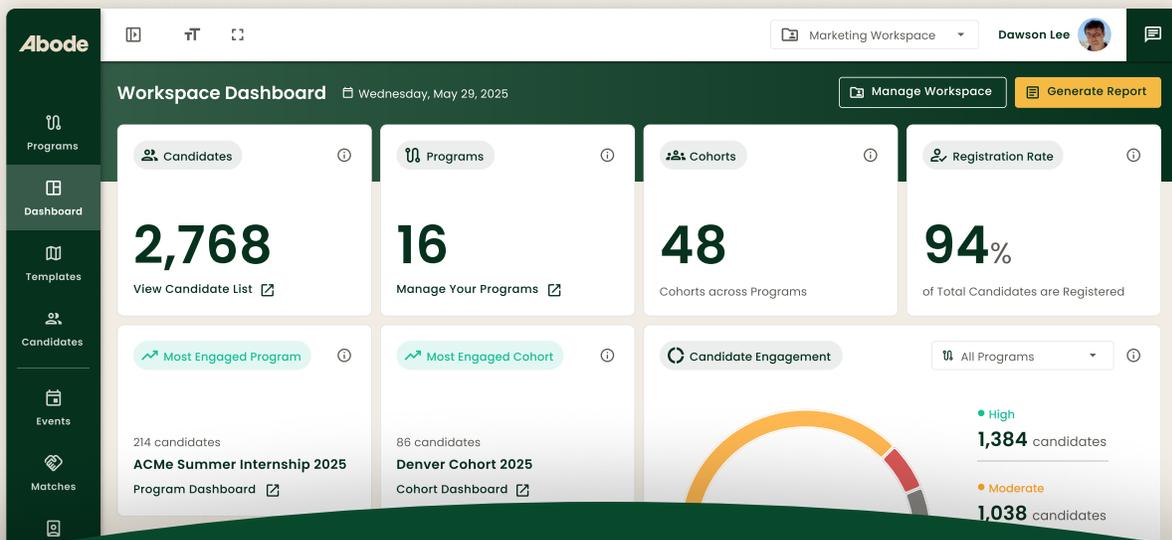
## 5 Insights

Successful programs are driven by insights and intelligence that helps program managers maintain spot friction early on, make adjustments as they go, and improves the program experience — so every team member has visibility around engagement, readiness, and progress across cohorts.

# How Abode fits into your tech stack

You already have an ATS/TA for recruiting, an HRIS for employee data, and a CRM/Recruitment for candidate relationships. Abode fills the gap your other tools can't by keeping cohort participants engaged and informed throughout long lead times before their first day interning for your organization. This missing coordination layer creates a centralized hub for communication, engagement, and renege risk management, so that programs and candidates never fall through the cracks.

- ✓ **Provides a single source of truth** by centralizing communication, giving you real-time visibility into cohorts, driving better engagement, and helping to reduce renege rates across programs.
- ✓ **Identifies at-risk candidates early** through engagement tracking, so you can prevent renegees and improve cohort sentiment before challenges arise.
- ✓ **Automates and scales your processes** so that routine touch points, task tracking, and reporting become less of a chore and free program managers to focus on high-value relationship building.
- ✓ **Integrates with your existing HR stack**, connecting your ATS, HRIS, and CRM to create a seamless, end-to-end post-offer experience.



**Build a program that delivers unforgettable experiences (and better outcomes)**

Reneges may feel inevitable, but they don't have to be. With the right platform and processes in place, you can create top performing programs that reduce renege rates and create meaningful experiences for candidates. With Abode, companies are achieving renege rates of 2% – better than the average industry standards.

See how Abode integrates with your existing tech stack, enables real-time engagement tracking, and saves program managers time on planning and execution.

[Schedule a Demo](#)

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