Email Contact Center

Product Description:

Email Contact Center (ECC) is an email distribution system for use in inbound and outbound contact center environments. The technology is designed to either complement existing inbound/outbound telephony call centers or to function as the sole method of customer contact for 'email only' contact centers.

ECC's key functions are to route email to the most appropriate agents (users) based on administrator defined business rules. These rules can include routing messages based on agent skills. If a new message is identified as part of a message thread with a customer, ECC routes the message to the last agent who handled the interaction.

Most companies seek a solution that is feature-rich and easily administered. ECC's interfaces were designed following Microsoft's guidelines for solution development. They are meant to have the look and feel of other Microsoft products. This means that the first time an administrator or agent uses the software the experience is positive. This lends itself to a smooth learning curve where the administrator or agent can focus on learning their job rather than learning the software. If the administrator is familiar with the Microsoft Management Console, the administrator will know how to navigate the ECC administration console. If agents have used Outlook Express, they will be able to navigate the ECC client interface with ease. In addition, the ECC package comes with a plug-in to Microsoft Outlook so the user can manage their ECC emails alongside their personal or other type emails; Outlook is the only application they will need on their desktop.

In addition to ECC's richness of features, a key reason a company would choose ECC over a competing product is price. This powerful solution provides features such as message thread management, load balancing, intelligent routing, Content Analysis and Quality Assurance for a fraction of the total integration cost of similar competing products. ECC services can be kept on a single server for a small Contact Center or expanded over multiple servers for multi-site, Enterprise-wide solutions that may cover the globe and accommodate limitless agents working at the same time. As the volume of emails coming in to the Contact Center increases, the software components can be placed on different servers to load-balance the solution thereby allowing for exponential growth. ECC is a solution that can grow with the company's business, at an affordable price.

In summary, our clients will realize an accelerated return on investment while our client's customers will realize faster and more accurate responses to their email inquiries. The amount of features ECC offers, the technology on which the solution is based, and the low total cost of implementation makes ECC the best solution for handling email.

Maximize Agent Performance.

- Provide email agents with the tools to manage their messages to customers:
    - Response Templates
    - Message Thread presentation and management
    - Real-Time reports
    - Live Consult feature, to receive support from SME, Co-Worker or Supervisor remote by sharing emails
    - Training
- Route messages to appropriate agent based on skills.

Manage Performance.

- Tools to manage the email queues:
    - Service (Mailbox and Group) level reporting
    - Prioritization of email backlog based on message type or other indicators

Email Processes – Guiding Principles.

- Adhere to established service level response times:
    - Industry benchmarks range from 4 to 48 hours (1).
    - 88% of consumers expect a complete resolution to an e-mail inquiry within 24 hours (2).
    - 57% of consumers said they will make a phone call if an e-mail message goes unanswered (2).
    - Fifty percent of consumers said online businesses should improve e-mail response times (2).
    - 41% percent of companies who use an automated email management system said their agents process 9 or more emails per hour (2).

1 PA Consulting 2002
2 Jupiter Metrics: Customer Relationship Management, December 2002, January 7, 2003

Sample Architecture

A sample, reference architecture is illustrated in the figure below. The requirement for this client was to support 4 contact centers, one in Denver, New York, Los Angeles, and Dallas. Each site has one or more agents answering emails, and each site needs basic automatic management of email threading and message routing. Note that the term "Post Office" does not imply a specific email subsystem such as Microsoft Exchange or Groupwise. These are ECC Post Offices that operate independently of the company email system.

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                            ECC

        WebServices              Crystal Reports
        (single or part of
        IIS server farm)

        Database
        (single or part of
        SQL Cluster)

   Post Office Denver   Post Office New York   Post Office Los Angeles   Post Office Dallas

   Mailboxes  Server engine   Mailboxes  Server engine   Mailboxes              Mailboxes  Server engine
              CA                          CA                                                CA

        Agents              Agents              Agents              Agents
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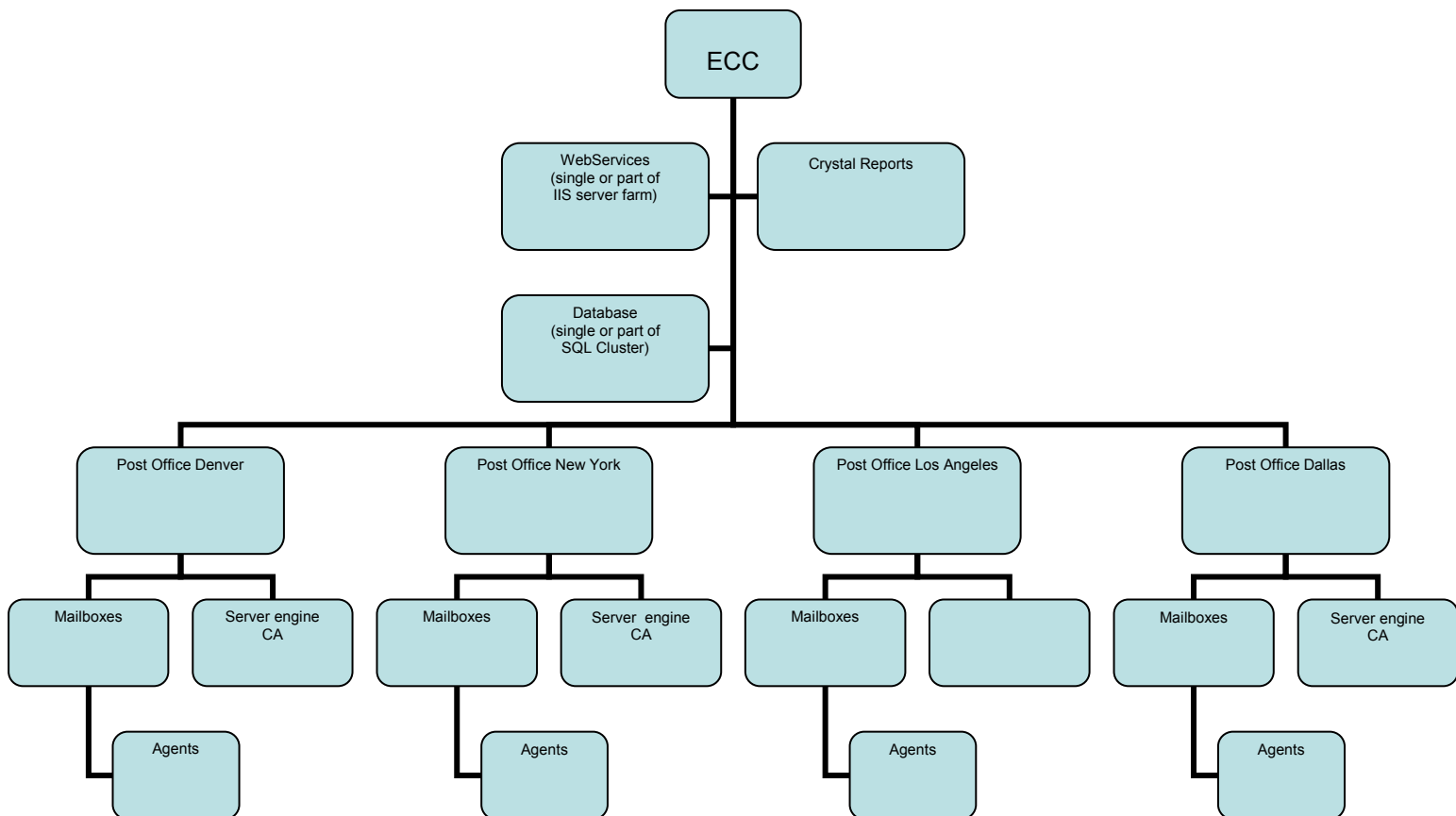
Product Comparison Matrix:

FEATURE	Email Contact Center (ECC)	FULL FEATURE DETAILS
Number of agents supported	1000+	
Automatic Acknowledgement	X	Customizable Replies sent to customers to acknowledge the receipt of their email.
Spell checker capability	X	Agents are able to check the spelling of their responses before sending the Reply.
Report functionality	X	Reports detailing response time, email active time,
Content Analysis	X	Email body is scanned upon introduction to the system and results are used to suggest possible responses, route the email to the best agent, or automatically send the best reply to the customer.
Available 9X5 or 24X7 Support	X	See cell comment for 9X5 and 24X7 pricing.
Agents able to suspend emails?	X	Agents can suspend messages to be worked later if they need to research, consult another agent or go to lunch.
email transfer ability	X	Agents can transfer misdirected emails to the correct mailbox group.
Subject-based routing to agents	X	Email subject lines are scanned upon introduction to the system and the email is then routed to the best agent or SME.
Support for MIME attachments	X	Agents can view attachments sent by the customer if the agent's desktop has the necessary program to open the type of attachment.
Global Response Directory	X	Administrator can create standard responses that all agents can use to answer emails uniformly.
Junk Mail Screening	X	Email addresses such as "SPAM@yahoo.com" or "*@hotmail.com" may be specified. When these emails are received they are flagged as 'Junk' and not delivered to the agents for processing.
Proprietary Client	X	Solves browser security restriction issues.
Remote Post Office Administration	X	Administrator can administer the software from a remote server.
Administration via a web interface	X	Administration of certain or all features allowed via webpages.
Manual Retrieval of emails	X	Agents can request that a certain new email be delivered to them.

Skill-based grouping	X	Distributed skill-based groups allow additional differentiation in mailboxes. Ex. A 'Shoes' mailbox might have separate agents for women's, men's and children's shoes.
Ability to add attachments	X	Administrators can select which attachments will be available for agents to add to email replies.
Supervisor review	X	Supervisor can require that all outgoing emails from certain agents need approval. This is extremely valuable for Quality Assurance, training, and monitoring purposes. This prevents emails containing inappropriate legal or financial advice from getting delivered.
Permission-based reports	X	Access to reports is based on the agent or supervisor NT Login.
SMTP Authentication	X	Ensures secure SMTP server connections only.
Login Security and Permissions via NT Login	X	The Email Contact Center login uses the NT User/Group Manager to allow ease of administration and security.
Agent selectable interface 'skin'	X	Agents will be able to select from 5 different 'look and feel' themes to make their experience more personal.
Agent Directory for Instant Messaging	X	Agents will be able to text chat with a Consult agent or SME while viewing the same email.
Scalability/Load balancing	X	Additional servers can be deployed as email and agent volume increase.
Windows-based client interface	X	No need for SSL encryption necessary for security with browser-based interfaces.
Message Archiving	X	Old messages are able to be archived to maintain expedient database processing and to make historical reporting easier.
Agent Response Directory	X	Agent can create customized standard responses to emails that are available to that agent only.
Reports use Crystal Reports	X	ECC uses the flagship reporting tool Crystal Reports.
Support for MX Records	X	MX Records takes care of routing outgoing emails. If the first SMTP server fails, the MX Records forwards the outgoing email to a different administered SMTP server.
Administration via Microsoft Management Console	X	Version 2.0 users the Microsoft MMC (Management Console). The design will look very much like any back office MS product using the MMC.
Fault tolerance	X	If a server goes down another server will be able to keep the agents and mailboxes in production.
Employs Web Services	X	Web Services allow this solution to be easily integrated with other solutions creating a best-in-class CRM suite.
Maximum # of agents	X	
Support for HTML emails	X	Display of HTML based emails can be allowed or prevented.

Administration via a smart phone or PDA	X	Administrators can change agent skills, monitor queues, receive alerts when thresholds are exceeded via a smart phone with a special look and feel.
Agent initiated emails	X	Agents can be allowed to compose new outgoing emails.

Product Screen Shots

The screen shots that follow are meant to present a sample of some of Email Contact Center's features and in no way represent all of its features.
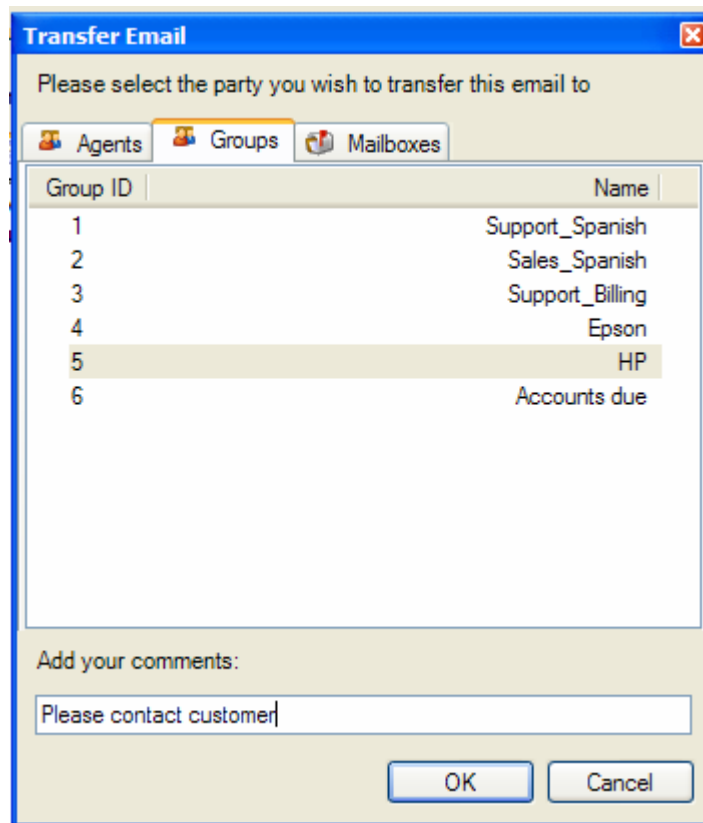
Email Contact Center Windows Client Interface

The Email Contact Center Client closely resembles Microsoft Outlook.
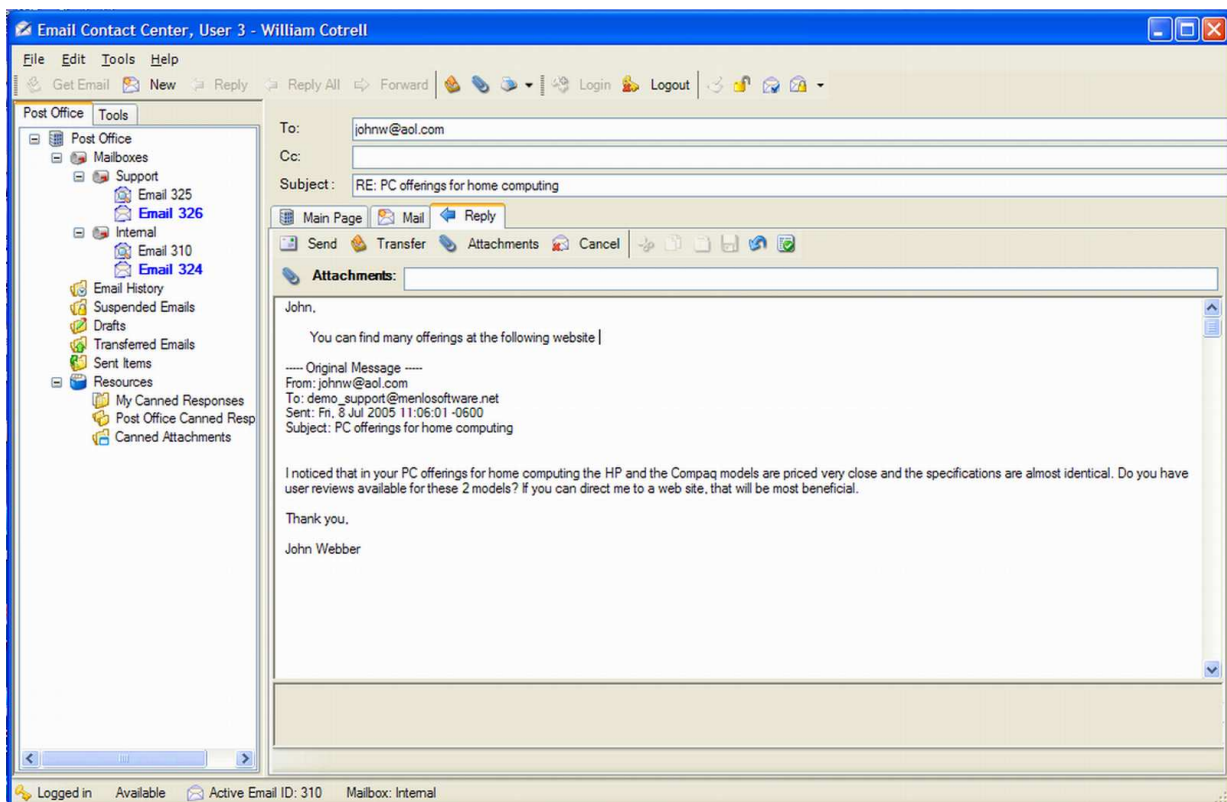
Transfer Email

This function works essentially the same as a telephone call transfer. The agent selects another agent, Mailbox or Group from a list of logged-in agents or available mailboxes and groups and transfers the email. The transferring agent can also add comments such as directions or other information.

Suspend Email

Suspend lets agents suspend an email for an amount of time ranging from one minute to one week. An automatic alert is sent to the agent when the timer expires.
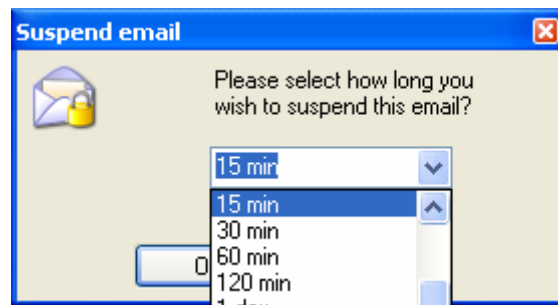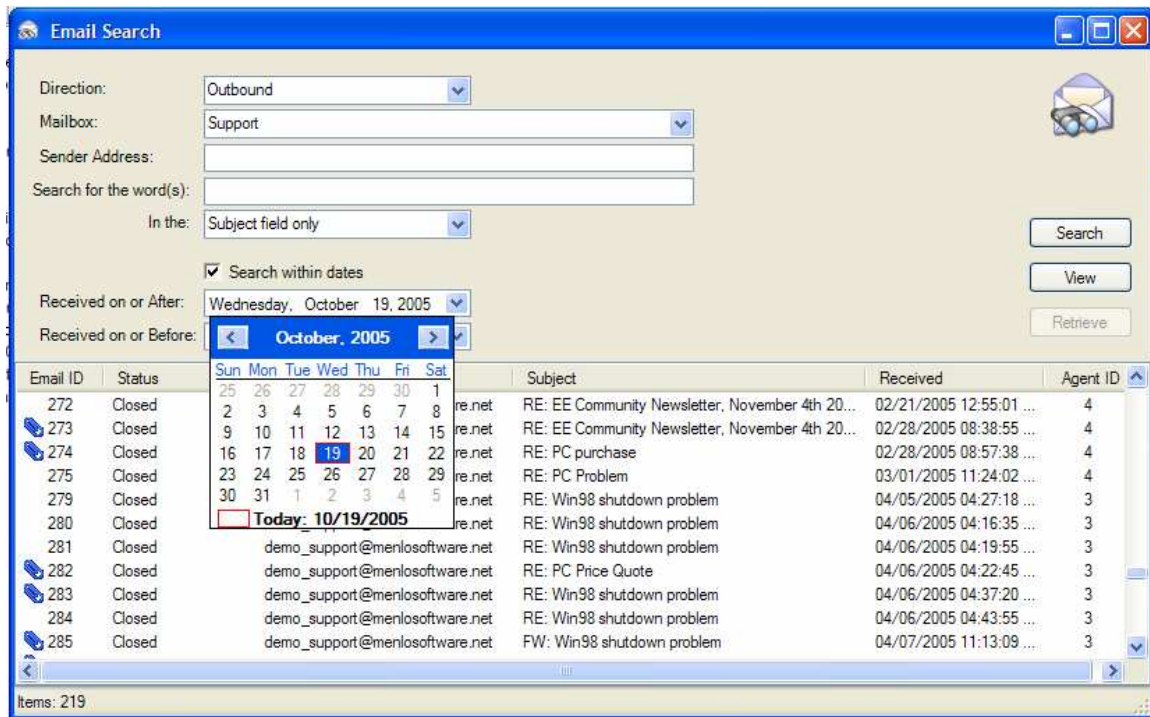
Manual Email Retrieval

Agents can manually retrieve emails at any time if they know the Email ID or they can search for the email they want.
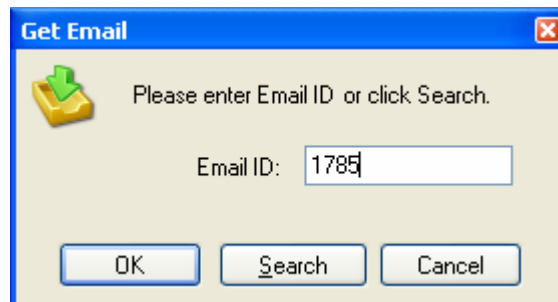
Email Search

If the agent does not know the Email ID of the email they wish to work they can perform a search.

Quality Assurance

Under the "Supervisor View" of Email Contact Center Client, managers can see agent activity (Agents) and do Quality Assurance (QA) to approve or reject the transmission of emails sent by employees. This prevents inappropriate email correspondence from reaching the customer.
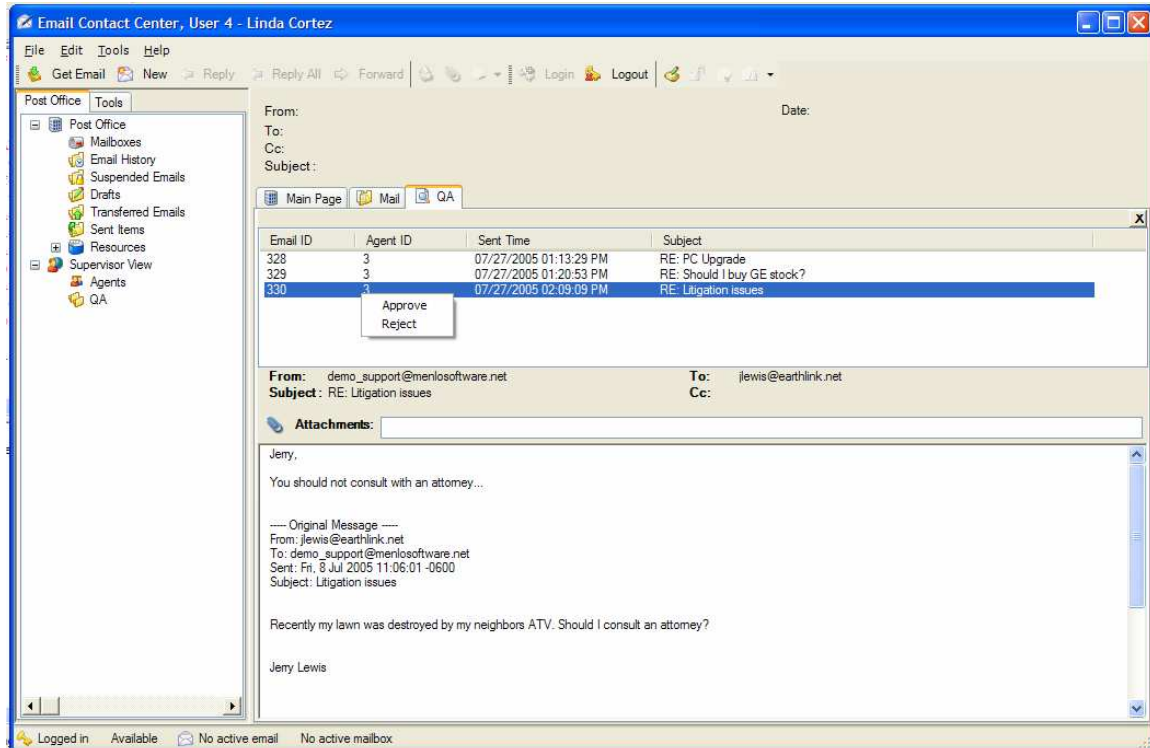
Email Contact Center Microsoft Outlook Plug-In

Agents can use the ECC Client plug-in within Microsoft Outlook thereby reducing the need for running two email applications. Agents can manage their personal and company emails along with their ECC emails.
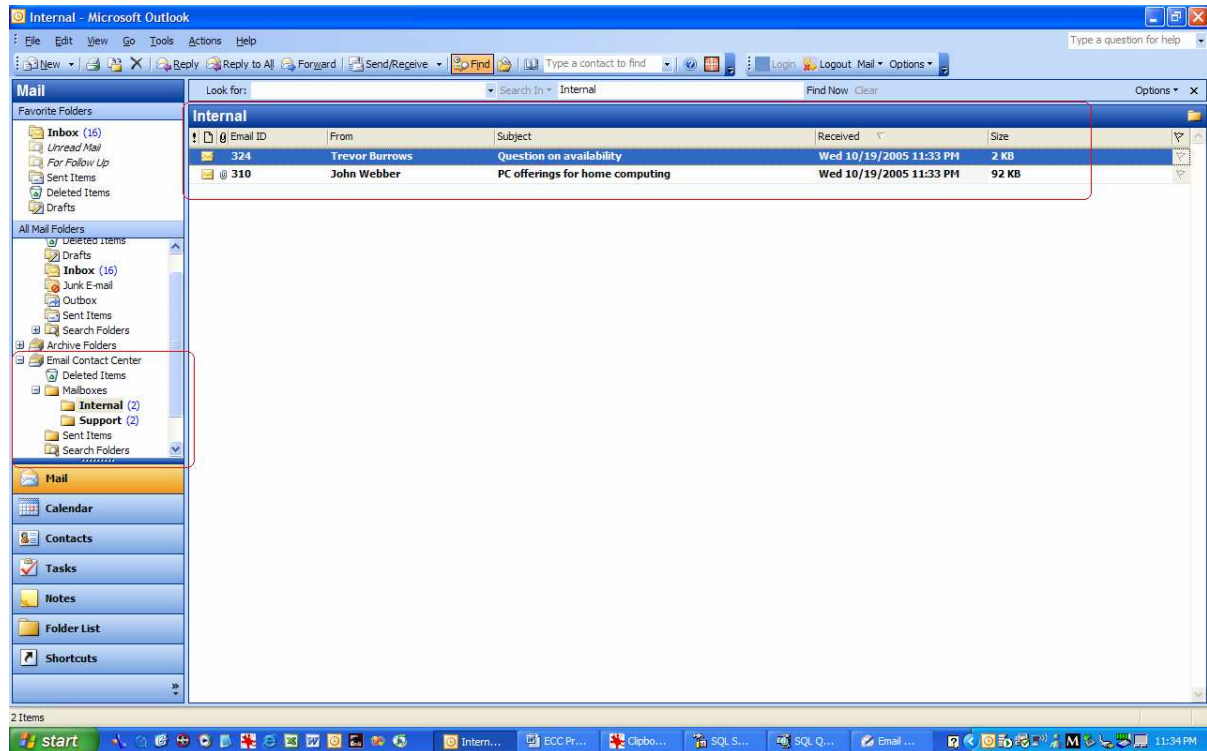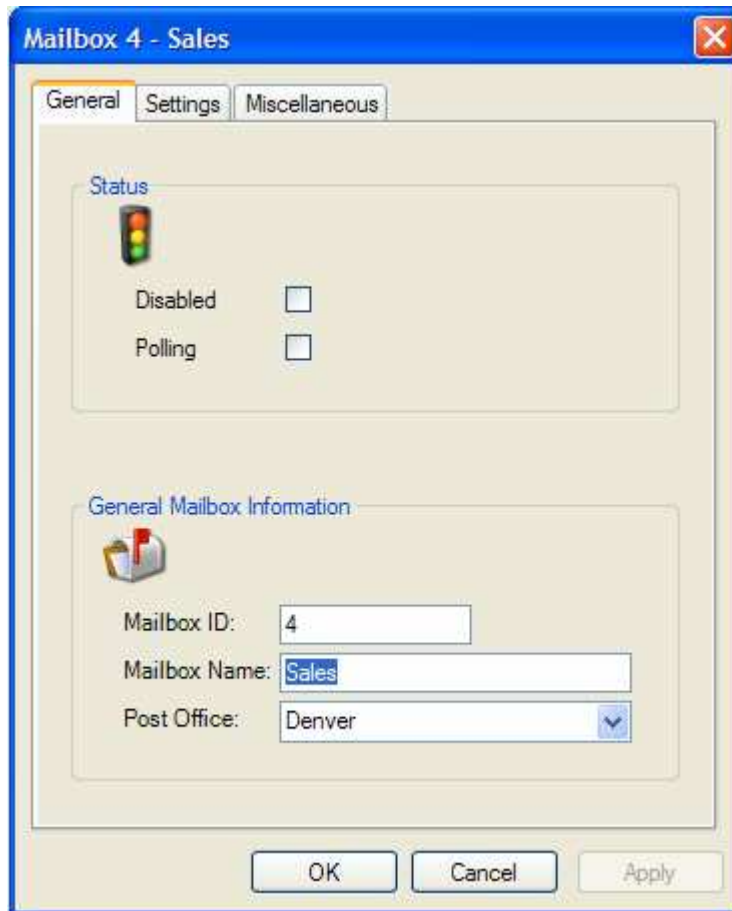
Email Contact Center Administration Interface

Email Contact Center uses an administration interface that looks like the Microsoft MMC (Management Console). Administrators can manage all Post Offices, or only what they have permissions to administer, from one location.
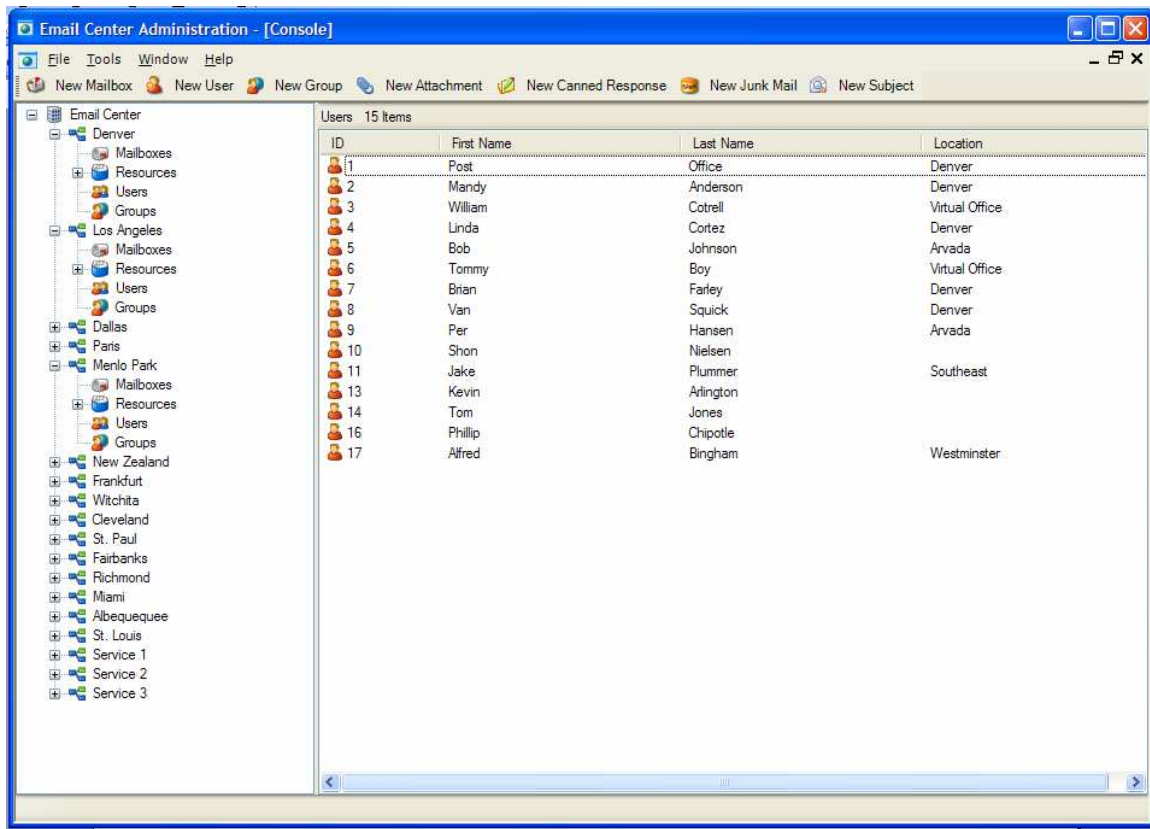
Mailbox Properties

Mailboxes can be moved to any Post Office if there is a need to load balance emails or if one of the Post Offices is down due to maintenance or a server failure.

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Agent Properties

All Agents (users) belong to a Post Office. All Agents can belong to one or more Mailboxes. Agents can also be assigned to a group. This is required to take full advantage of subject-based routing.
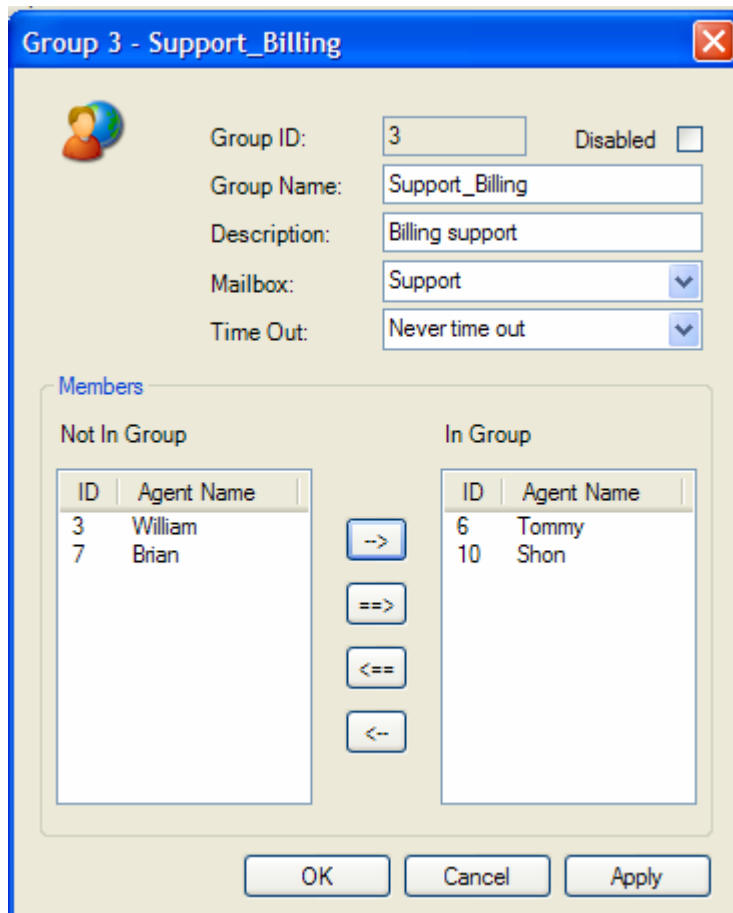
Group Properties

The group is a member of one mailbox. Agents who are also members of this mailbox can be assigned to the group. Group's represents a "destination". Emails with certain content, such as the subject, can be routed to a group. This allows for effective use of agents qualified for specific types of email. For example, you could setup a "Spanish" group for those qualified to handle emails with Spanish content.

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Junk Mail Screening

Junk mail screening is based on the sender address and/or the subject line of an email. emails flagged as 'junk' are not routed to the agent.
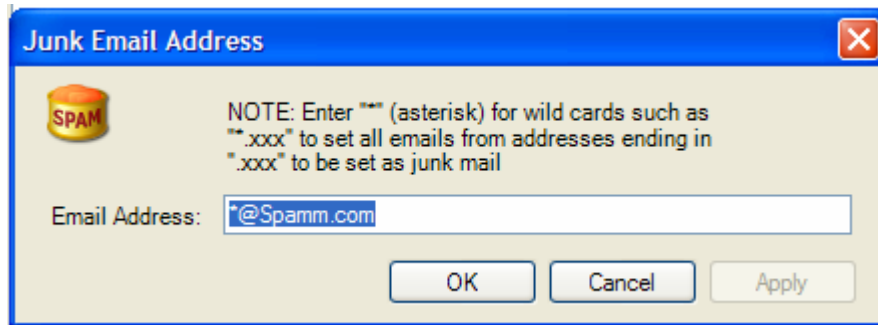
Conclusion

Email Contact Center offers a robust set of features required to manage and support an enterprise-class customer facing email response management solution. Pricing information is available upon request from Menlo Software, Incorporated. Contact us at www.menlosoftware.net.