Communications Center: Email Queuing
MODULE PAPER

Create a world where customers contacting you via email are consistently delighted by your organization's ability to respond in a professional, yet personalized manner with accurate information that demonstrates an understanding of their journey. At the same time, you'll have a tool that expands your contact center capabilities and creates significant process and resource efficiencies.

Enghouse Interactive's Communications Center-*Email Queuing* helps you drive contact center performance and customer service to new levels through key functions and processes such as:

- Streamlining email processes
- Audit trails and archiving
- Simplifying Information Transfer
- Personalizing Customer Service
- Understanding the Customer Journey

Communications Center (CC) - Email Queuing provides full management and control of email traffic in a contact center environment. As a fully integrated module of CC, Email Queuing applies all of the skills-based routing and queuing parameters of CC to emails, allowing your contact center managers and agents to handle emails consistently and seamlessly alongside other customer interactions.

Emails are queued and delivered to agents based on their availability, workload and skill-set. You can configure agents to handle multiple concurrent emails, also taking into account the number of interactions they are permitted to handle for other channels, such as phone calls, mobile text (SMS), chat or fax. If an agent takes too long to open a delivered email (based on a time window that's defined by you), it can be placed back into the queue to be delivered to the next available agent.

Incoming emails are held by the email queue on the CC server and are delivered to agents only as they are ready to deal with them, and their configuration permits. Agents who are logged out, on a break, or already dealing with interactions, are not delivered emails until they become available according to their configuration settings.

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Streamlining Email Processes

Bringing emails into CC (rather than just handling them in your standard office email application) means the same contact center standards and metrics for voice interactions are applied to email interactions. It also means your contact center principles and parameters, not available in an ordinary email environment, can be applied to these interactions.

Bringing emails into CC's TouchPoint means queued emails are incorporated into agents' and supervisors' day-to-day operation, giving managers visibility and tools across all media channels, agents and queues, for the whole contact center.
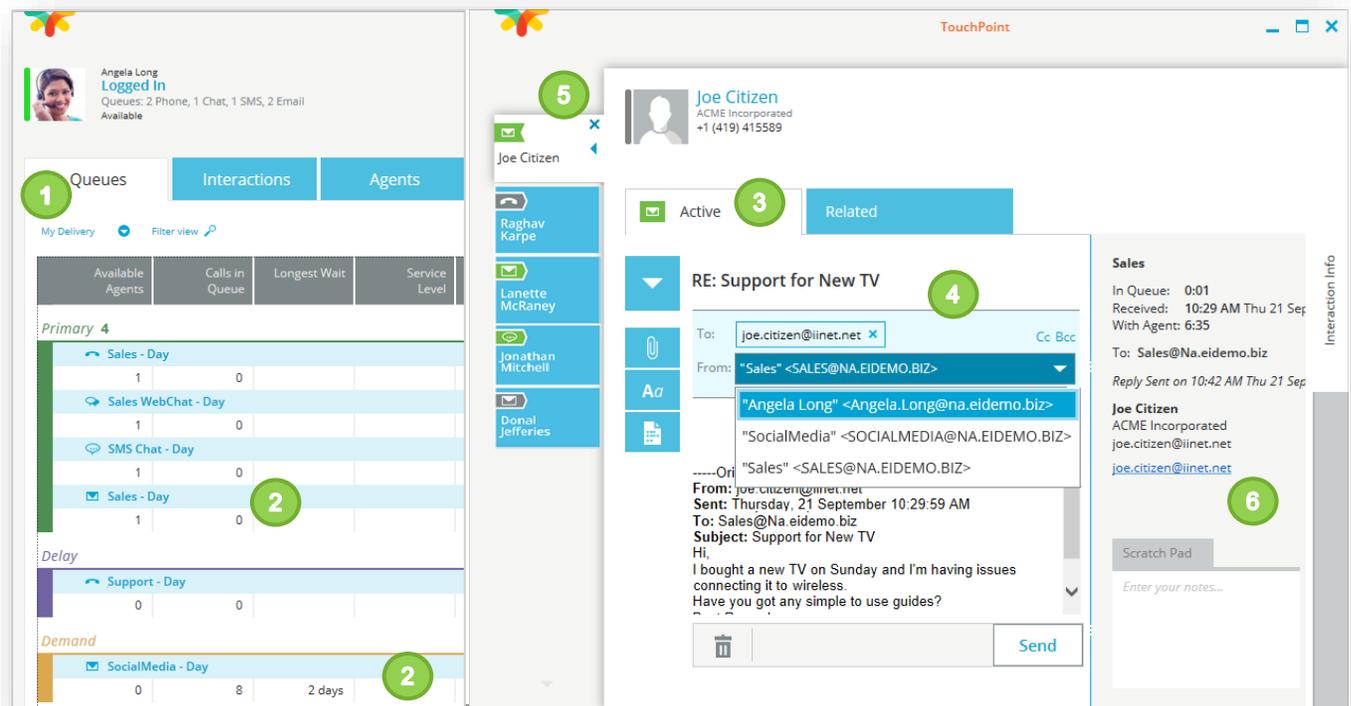

Figure 1.   Queues View and Interactions windows

1	Primary TouchPoint window showing Queues View tab.
2	Emails queues (also showing Phone Call, SMS and Web Chat queues).
3	Interaction window for all media channels.
4	Email response tab with Template drop down.
5	Communications interactions the agent is currently handling
6	Scratch Pad for transferable notes.

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Standardization: Process standardization means agents are delivered each interaction in a consistent way via the TouchPoint user interface, regardless of the interaction channel, for example email, phone or chat.

Templates: Standard corporate reply templates can be centrally created and maintained to ensure agents send professional responses that comply with the contact center's communications standards.

Analytics: All interactions can be analyzed via the Communications Center reporting database, allowing managers to compare activity and performance across all agents and interaction channels in the contact center.
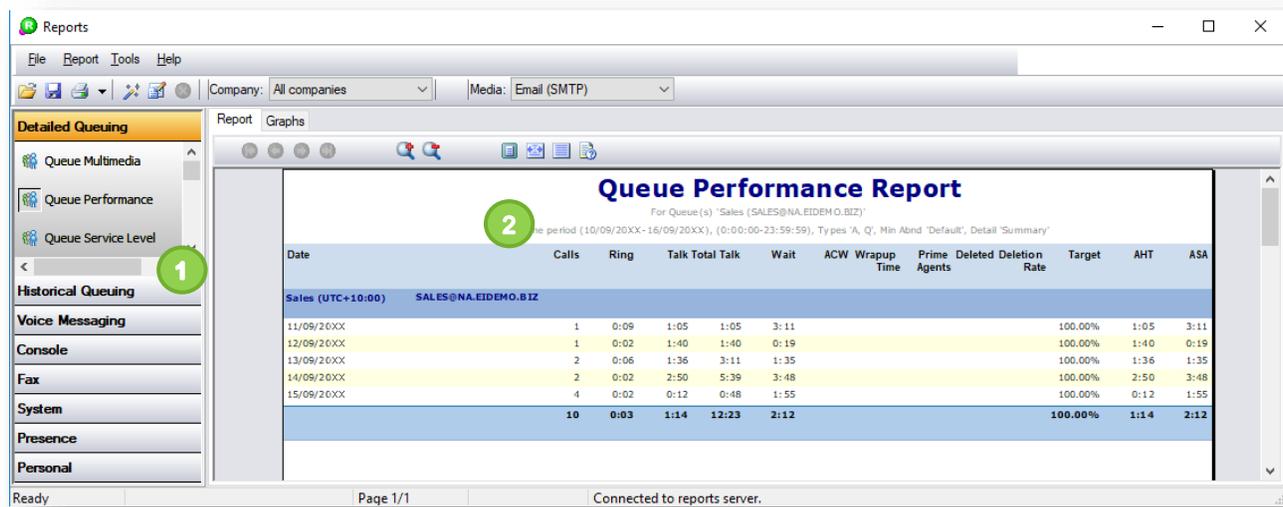

Figure 2. Queue Performance Report generated from Communications Center Reports (see *CC Reporting Module Paper* for more details).

1	Pre-configured Queue Reports
2	Queue Report output

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Audit Trails and Archiving for Compliance and Follow-Up

Protect both your customers and your agents by ensuring there are clear audit trails created that are readily accessible for future investigation.

Audit Trails: Emails create audit trails that provide peace-of-mind to your customer and your organization through documenting the details of the interaction. CC's native *Media Viewer*, which comes as standard with CC, allows administrators to easily search CC's interaction history based on different parameters.
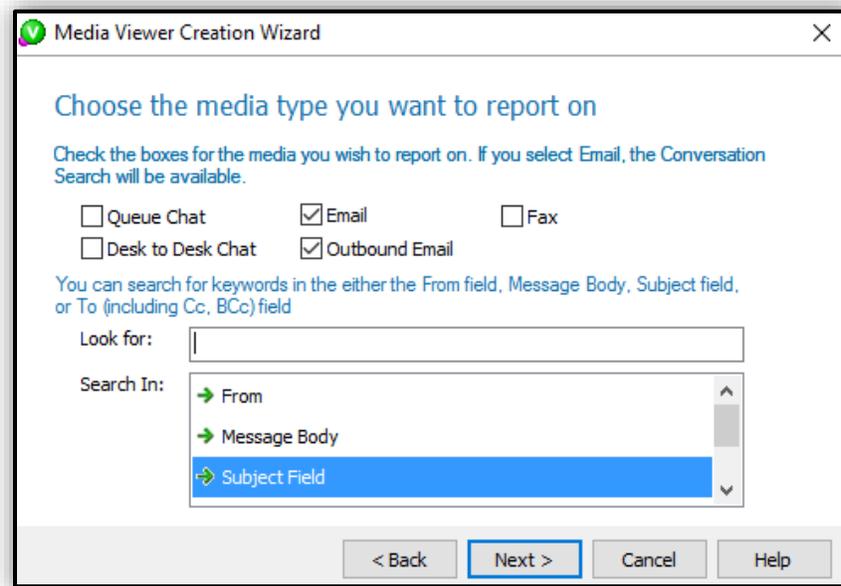

Figure 3.   *Media Viewer* lets you search for specific interactions or trails across all channels

Automatic Archival:

- **For on premises Microsoft Exchange:** Administrators can archive to any email system that their server can send an email to, enabling them to automatically keep additional copies of queue emails in the following states: arrival in the queue; when it is forwarded; or when it is replied to. In addition to the automatic archiving options, all emails can be accessed by *Media Viewer*. Additional functionality and flexibility can be achieved with Enghouse Interactive's add-on **Media Extraction** module, see below.

- **For any email system, including Microsoft Office 365:** Additional copies of queue emails from any email system can be automatically archived using Enghouse Interactive's add-on *Media Extraction* module. The *Media Extraction* module can extract any emails that have been queued by the CC system, and stores them in an SQL database rather than an external mail system. In addition to email, this module handles interactions for CC's other text-based media channels, i.e., SMS, fax and web chat.

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Attachment Database: All Email attachments can be retrieved from *Media Viewer*. Say goodbye to lost or misplaced documents.

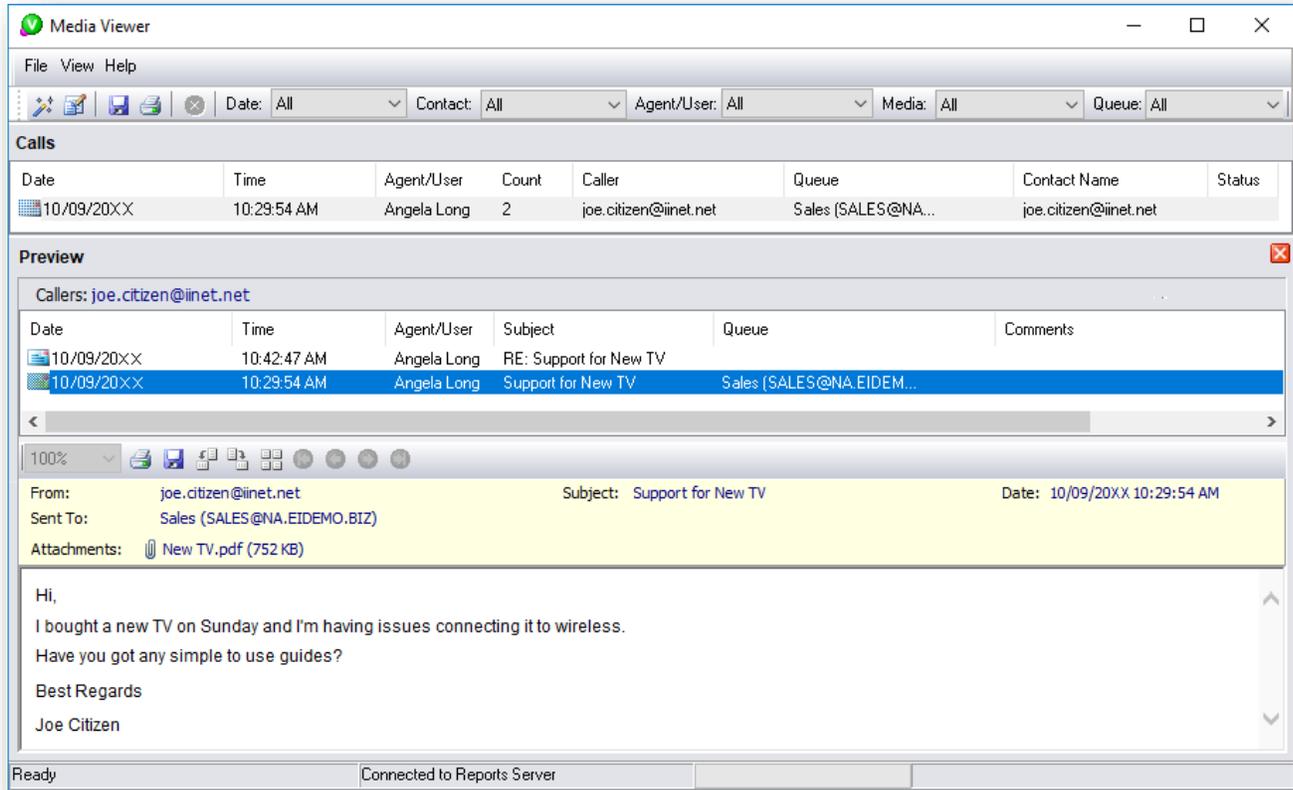**Figure 4.** Search and retrieve emails and email attachments from *Media Viewer*

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Information Transfer

A simplified and safe process for information transfer enables your agents to get on with the job of resolving customer issues and inquiries, safe in the knowledge that they have quick access to the right data at the right time.

File Transfer: Empower agents and customers with an interaction channel that handles highly detailed information. For example, an IT Helpdesk may require customers to send log files as attachments.

Secure: Per-queue parameters control the sending and receiving of email attachments, blocking inappropriate sizes and types (e.g., executables). Virus protection is regarded as the responsibility of the host IT function, since the underlying email solution is typically used by the whole organization.

Simplified Handling: Emails arriving to the queue are treated as new interactions. They are queued and delivered to agents as they become available. The subject of each email is displayed in TouchPoint prior to opening, and a preview is also available to permitted agents. Agents can open or save the attachment as per normal email handling procedures.
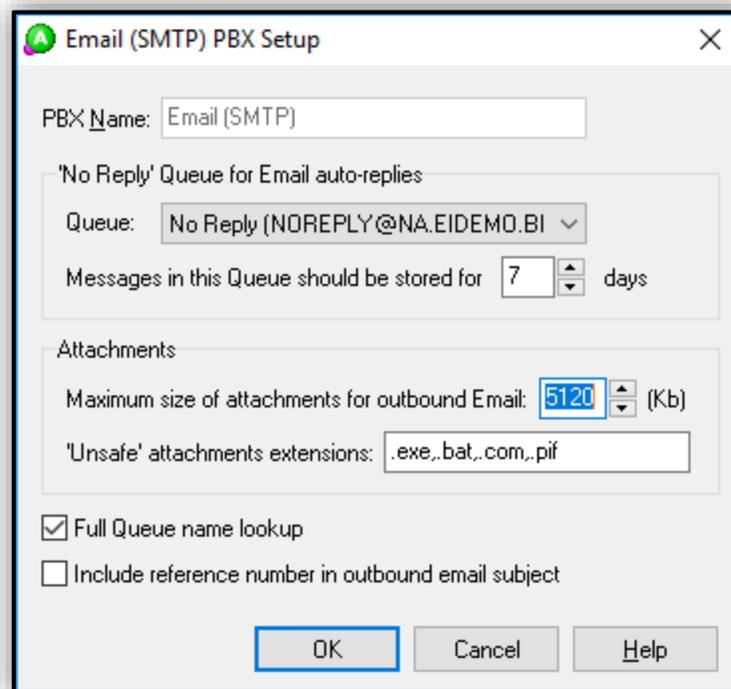

Figure 5.   Configure email parameters

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Personalizing Customer Service

Technology creates efficiencies which assist with productivity gains, but in some circumstances managers need to allow for variances, and CC's Email Queuing configuration provides this flexibility.

Send from Agent or send from Queue: Permitted agents can choose on a case-by case-basis whether to send an outbound/reply email from the queue or from their individual office email account. This affects the "reply-to" address on the email, dictating whether a customer's email goes back to the queue again, or directly to the agent. This setting is turned off by default, but can be invaluable in the right circumstances, for example for specialist agents who will continue to own the interaction, rather than having future communications delivered to someone less knowledgeable.
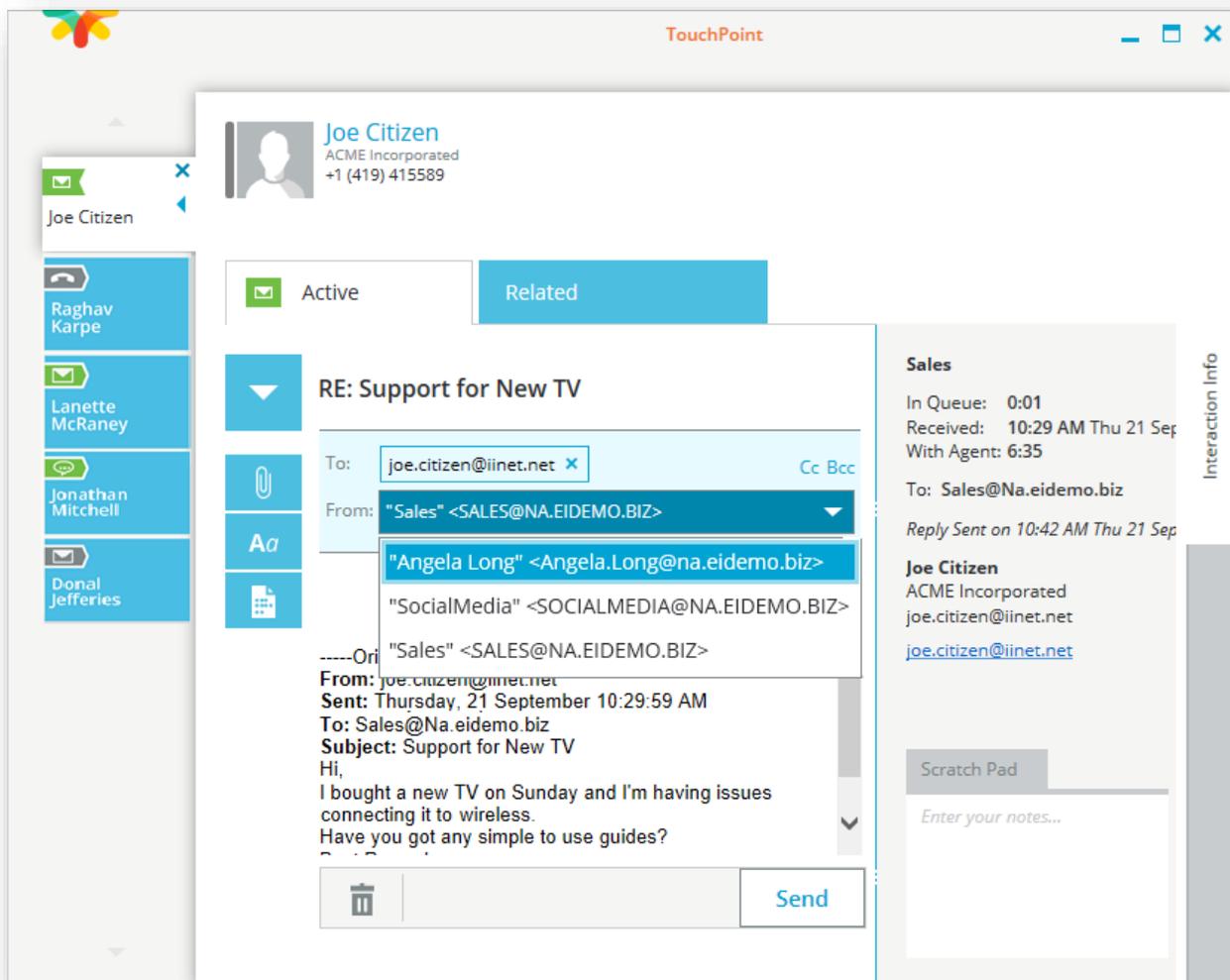

Figure 6.   Interaction window showing reply from email address options

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Customized permissions: Customization on a per-agent basis allows an Administrator to manage the many different functions an agent or supervisor can access, for example the ability to send a new email from the queue, or pick up emails delivered to other agents.
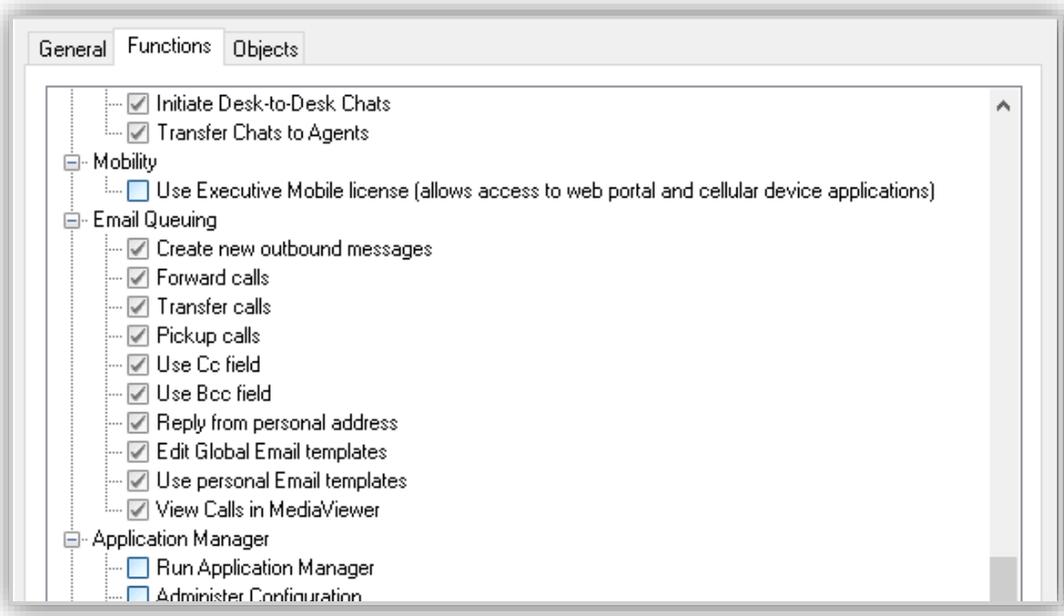

Figure 7.   Permissions available for email queuing

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Understanding the Customer Journey

Your customers may contact you via different media channels, so wherever possible you will wish your agents to see the whole journey, regardless of interaction or channel type. Linking interactions across multiple channels is possible when the relevant contact details for that customer are stored in the CC internal phonebook database or Contact Server data. Channel interactions that use the same contact address can always be linked, for example web chat and email interactions, where the customer has used their email address as their contact detail for the web chat as well as email.

- **Related Interactions View:** Agents can view all of a customer's interactions across all channels (not just email) in TouchPoint's 'Related' View.

- **Access Historical Interactions:** Agents can see that a customer has communicated previously with your organization and drill down as required using *Media Viewer*, reviewing background information that can assist with achieving faster resolution.

- **Ownership:** Agents can immediately see if the customer is already engaged in conversation with another agent. Utilizing TouchPoint Instant Messaging, agents can quickly ascertain whether they should pass the interaction on to this agent to ensure a seamless journey for the customer.
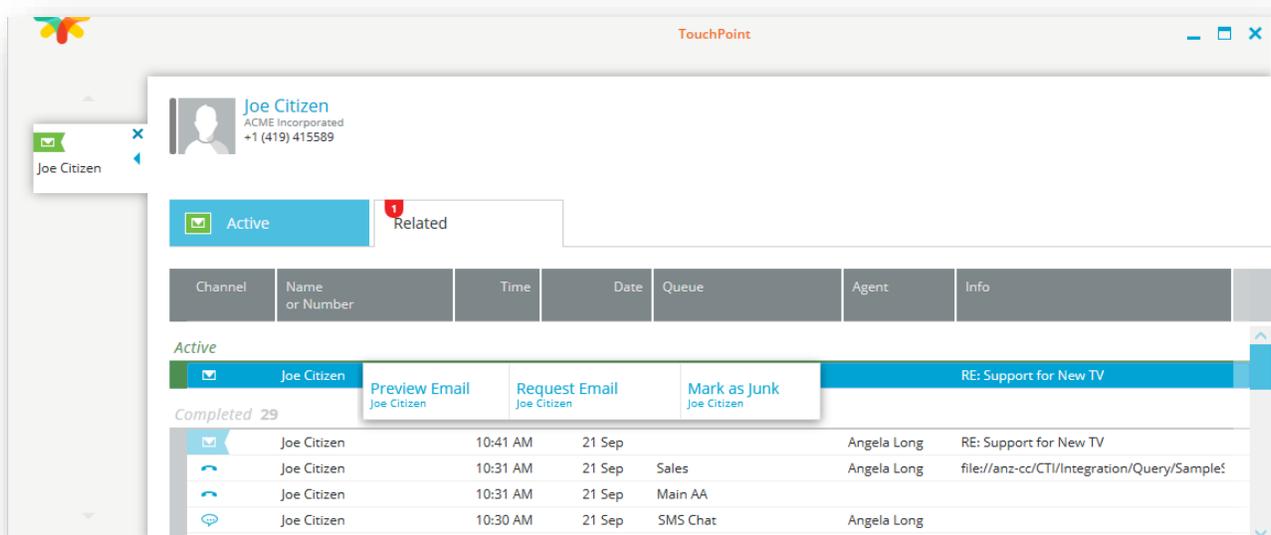

Figure 8. TouchPoint's *Related* Interactions view shows previous emails related to any specific customer in your database, if linked to CC. In the example above, Agent Angela Long is on a call with Joe Citizen. The red alarm in the Related tab alerts her that there is an Active, unopened email in the queue. Angela can then preview the email, and request delivery to herself.

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Feature / Function Matrix

Features	Usage
Auto Archiving	Emails can be automatically archived to a local or off-site email address specified and/or viewed in *Media Viewer* (launched within the Reports application).
Auto Log Out	Agents forgetting to put themselves on break, will be automatically logged out to ensure the interaction gets answered by an available team member
Centralized Reporting	Reports can be viewed on interactions initiated via email
Custom Templates	Administrators can create a set of corporate templates that are stored in a central repository.
Customized Security	Customized security per agent allows an Administrator to manage the many different functions an agent can access.
Delivery limit	Managers can choose to deliver multiple emails at once to specific agents, or have them answer each individually. They would normally base this decision on the number and types of other interactions they are expected to handle, which can all be pre-specified.
Demand	Based on permissions, supervisors can request immediate delivery of a specific email in the queue, or an email that has already been delivered to an agent – useful if an agent has gone home sick etc.
Standard email functions available	Standard email functions such as view, reply, forward, cc, bcc, transfer, create new, hold and save are available. Agents can also view, save or include attachments in a reply email, and emails can be saved in .eml or.txt format. Spell check and email formatting are also available.
Additional Contact Center functions provided	In addition to the standard email functions, agents have the option to Answer, Transfer, Hold, and Hang-up an email (mark as completed), simplifying adoption of any new channel by making contact center functions consistent across all interactions.
Last Called Agent	If enabled, CC's "Last called agent" functionality attempts to deliver emails to the agent who answered an email most recently from a specific sender, as long as the agent is available to take delivery.
Manage Junk Emails	Managers can easily review and remove junk emails from the queue where necessary.
Media Viewer	Supervisors and agents can view both details and the associated conversations of previously handled emails via *Media Viewer*.
Mode announcements	Consistent with the standard practice of playing voice announcements to phone callers, Administrators can configure automated text "announcements" or auto-responses for email, based on the mode of the queue. Responses are

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	automatically returned to the email sender while the email is handled according to the queue's delivery rules for that time of day.
Notes	Agents can add notes to the email interaction even once the email is completed, useful if they wish to respond promptly but have additional background information to attach to the email.
Personal Reply	Permitting agents to choose their individual email account as the "from" address, rather than the queue's, enables them to direct the customer reply back to their individual work email address rather than just to the queue in general. This could be helpful to prevent a future customer reply from being delivered to an uninformed agent.
Preferred Agent	This function allows administrators to select one or more agents who will be preferred for delivery of emails based on the sender email address.
Preview	Agents can preview the content of an email before taking delivery.
Queue statistics	Empower agents and inform managers with big picture insights to the volume, type and identity of interactions waiting in queues
Recall	Transferring agents can select a recall option to recall the email if the destination agent fails to answer within a specified time.
Skills-based Routing	Emails can be directed to the most appropriate agent based on the sender's email address. Further filtering can be achieved via CC's Email Distribution license, an additional plug-in that integrates to CC's Email Queuing module. This software add-on allows additional configuration to direct emails to the most appropriately skilled agent, based on key words in the email body or subject.
Support for embedded images	Images pasted into the text of an email are reproduced in context for inbound and outbound Email Queuing messages
Transfer to agent	Queue emails can be "transferred" to another agent, effectively transferring the ownership of the email. Optionally, due to the latent nature of email channel this function can also be enabled for agents not currently logged into the queue, a useful function, for example, for transferring ownership to subject matter experts. Emails can also be transferred to a different email queue. Either action effectively transfers ownership of the interaction within the contact center. Agents have the option to include transfer notes, which are viewable by the agent sender and recipient within TouchPoint.
Wrap-up codes	Wrap-up code options are available to add greater business intelligence to reporting on email activity.

Additional References and Resources

Omni-channel Solution Paper: http://www.enghouseinteractive.com/solutions/omni-channel-communications/