

## **Influencing Others: Developing your Skills**

Michael Emery, Securus



Michael's specialism is in Coaching health and safety practitioners. He sees their role as being a collaborative, supportive and helpful partner and having the attributes of a coach: asking the right questions, actively listening, empathising, building rapport, being solution-focused. He actively promotes the importance of improving practitioners' listening, communicating and influencing skills in order to gain a better understanding of workplace safety issues when engaging with staff to help them resolve problems.

Michael referred to there being several levels of listening. There are times when we are more concerned with what we are about to say than listening to the person who is speaking. Or we are distracted by background noise. However, the relationship we have with the speaker may also have a bearing upon how much we listen – for example, our boss or our spouse may require us to adopt more intense listening skills.

As an active listener be alert to verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Be aware that hand gestures can be contradictory to the message and, to the trained eye, more revealing as to the speaker's thoughts. Ask open rather than closed questions. Be more aware of the power of the question "Why?". Empathise by putting yourself in the other person's shoes and being non-judgemental.