



Introduction

Now I'd like to introduce you to Max from the Colchester Institute and Max you're coming with your educator's hat on aren't you?

Colchester Institute presentation

This is all about behavioural safety and vocational education and it's about the best fit for our evolving world.

[film clip]

For me this sums up the whole ethos of behavioural safety about the leadership of doing things the right way, showing people the right way and inspiring people to evolve and mature to do more and become more.

Hello, I'm Max, I am the Technical Services Manager for the Colchester Institute Group. We are a large FEHE College, four major campus sites across 35 miles of Essex: Clacton, Colchester, Braintree and Witham. About 14,000 students of all kinds, from very, very severely disabled, seriously, all the way up to MA and from every age range from 14 to people in their 80s.

We're frontline operational health and safety and the technicians that I run, there's 59 of them, and they support courses in all these different areas: art and design, beauty and so on.

There are about 1,100 students in construction, there's about 800/850 in engineering so we do a lot of things and every day is different.

Now if you look at the blurb about my little background there's a paragraph that you didn't get and the reason why I talked about things like the archaeology and theatre and parenting, well when I was a fulltime parent what I realised was we have no instincts, we actually know absolutely nothing as

small children, as babies, everything has to be learned, that ability to develop an instinct has to be learnt. So that's the very first building block of any process.

Theatre, working in technical theatre meant you're asked to do anything with anything to anything frequently in the dark, frequently at a height or in a pit or in a confined space and if you do your job really well nobody will notice you.

In archaeology we were doing things like driving dumper trucks without brakes, we were digging big holes in the ground with no shoring; we were having a lot of fun basically.

And there were all kinds of things that happened though that were unusual – this is relevant in two ways – we were digging a graveyard up back in 1985. I don't know if the constructions guys that are here, whether you've got teams that go and relocate burials, anybody do that? No right.

Well before we went and did this they said to me, you're going to go down, you're going to dig Lion Walk Churchyard up, don't take a pick axe and I thought why, you know and they told me why and I thought everybody's having a joke. So I asked around and everybody said do not take a pick axe because you might meet a lead coffin. Lead coffins are death's equivalent of the beer can.

How many of you have ever fired a staple gun or a nail gun into a beer can? Anybody? No. How many of you have shaken a can up and pulled the ring off the top? Yeah.

Well basically a lead coffin, a good one it's like a sealed wrapper, everything inside decays aerobically and then anaerobically and you create a kind of human soup; it's like a fluid under gaseous equilibrium. If you hit it with a pick axe it will erupt, so everybody is very, very careful.

Now we're basically looking at Roman archaeology underneath Georgian vaults underneath a Victorian church that's all being demolished and there

was a graveyard team that came in. I won't tell you the name of the builder but they were in, they were special sub-contractors that came in to dig out the vaults and dig out the bodies and they were all a bit cracked. You got talking to them and it was like Vietnam, the Polaroids would come out and they'd start saying 'this is me, I'm holding up these femurs' or 'this is when we found this skull' or they'd find a scalp and they'd start wearing it you know – they were seriously gone.

The interesting thing was I'd had all these images of Hammer Horror films that were on TV in the 70s and I was really expecting that and actually you crack open a burial vault and its all dry and dusty and got dry rot, there's virtually nothing there. In a few hundred years you hit a grave in the ground and the bones are usually still there, which shows you know you can't take it with you if you're wealthy.

So I had quite a varied background and then I became a sort of mature student at university, did a few things and couldn't get funding for a PhD and a job came up at the Institute and it was wielding a spanner as a Performing Arts Technician. I thought well okay I can do that, that's fine, it's going to make some money.

And I went there and found, although they said from day one safety is our top priority, it wasn't. And I actually ended up writing quite a bit of material, which I'll tell you about in a minute, but the thing is every day is different in FEH it really is, you never know what you're going to encounter.

We have so many students that do really simple things. How many times a week do we get students put hands in front of chisels and hit them. This was a really good one, this was a Health & Safety Committee recently and they have these pink reports, it's an HR thing, and there was a list of items on there and they said anybody want to make a comment and I said yeah can we just unpack this one, it says burnt hand in steamer trying to remove self tan – it is Essex okay. That was unusual, that was a good one.

Armed robbery, you don't expect that one to happen every day in education. Media students, there is a college – it's not mine thankfully – some media students said we've got a project, we've got to go out, we've got to film something. One of them knew the manager of a jewellery store, so they thought oh this will be good, we'll do a fake armed robbery.

So they went out into this town and they rocked up to the jewellery store, they got their camera out, all hell breaks loose, they've got alarms going off, they've got fake weapons and stuff. They come out of the jewellery store and they are met by the Armed Response Unit.

And as you can imagine, the Chief Constable for the area went and saw the Principal the next morning and he said this is all very well but do you know how many things you got wrong here. He said for one there was no plan, there was no risk assessment, there was no idea of what was going on, they didn't tell anybody what they were going to do, nobody asked what they were going to do. They were doing lots of ill-advised things, they didn't tell the police or any members of the public they just went and did it. And the key thing he said is if your student with the large fake gun hadn't dropped it when we told him to we would have shot him dead because that's what our guys are trained to do and that would have looked really good as corporate manslaughter.

[film clip]

There are of course many different professions our individual students can aspire to as you've seen.

[film clip]

So what is the best way to teach them how to be safe?

[film clip]

Okay so what did I do, why am I here? Well I discovered that they didn't really have health and safety inductions or anything like that for the students that we were working with and although they said health and safety is their top priority there was virtually none of that in practice. And I came in and said well when I used to work in theatre we used such and such British Theatre Technician Standard Conditions and all these kinds of things and we could bring that in.

I actually had a couple of students who were doing Hamlet and they were doing it in modern dress and they had an automatic hand gun prop and because of Pulp Fiction they thought this would be really cool and they went out into the refectory with it. And I said you can't do that, you know we have to have something in place to stop this. So I started writing health and safety inductions on the basis that although in theatre you create a world and you step into it, all the same rules, all the same laws still apply and there are things you can only do in a theatre space, you can't suddenly move out of that so I was starting to think about the psychology.

And then we had an incident in the art area. We had this guy turned up out of the bushes at the back of the College and he was covered in red, it looked like he was covered in blood and he had sticks with rags and they looked like they were covered in blood and he was muttering under his breath about killing people and doing things and sticking these sticks in the ground and then he disappeared off into more bushes. And it freaked a lot of people out as you can imagine and I thought it probably is a student and we found out yes it was and when they were talking to him to say why are you doing it the old excuse came out, which is well its my art and the artwork is people's reaction to what I'm doing.

So I thought about this and I wrote a guidance document called 'Safe Art in an Unsafe World', where I took hold of that idea, I didn't devalue the creative process, but I said you know while we value what you're doing and we understand that you want to be able to express your artwork, you've got to do it in such a way that people know its art, you've got to do it in a space where they expect to encounter it, there's got to be a sign here and there or

something so if its designed to shock or confront or whatever, people will know.

This led into things like Health and Safety South and various seminars. That's when I first encountered the stuff about DuPont and I remember a very big lesson from that. There was a guy talking, it was a couple of years back, and he said he was the Manager, he was going around the DuPont site and he had a Senior Manager with him and he'd encountered somebody where they couldn't see through the goggles that they were using so they had them on their head. And he said 'why are you doing that?' he said 'well they steam up'. And he thought okay; well I'll deal with that. So they carried on walking and then the Senior Manager turned around to him and he said 'you know you should have dealt with that' and he hadn't.

And the key thing was their policy is, if you can't manage safety you can't manage anything and I think that's absolutely true.

So this is all very interesting. I was at the Health & Safety Work Conference, Lord Young's conference, which is where I encountered Acting Up and I've seen The Red Shoes, and then PLASA, Professional Lighting And Sound Association. I became Vice Chair of the Health & Safety Managers' Network at the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region and I started talking about psychology and talking with students and feeding things in.

Having been to the 8th Behavioural Safety Conference last year what I realised when I was here, when I was standing here is 1. I was about the only education person that turned up, 2. all of you guys were working in fields where you were actually doing behavioural safety or you wanted to find out about it, you wanted to implement it but we were training students to work in all of your fields. So clearly we should be running behavioural safety because it fits what you're going to do.

So the next evolutionary step for us, it encourages students to be more mature and very effectively it encourages staff to set higher standards. Now I took this to ACER and I said this is the way we've got to go. And the Health &

Safety Managers that I met at that point were saying well my job is to say no, it's a tutor's job to explain why and I said no, this isn't the way forward, trust me, learner engagement, this is not the way forward.

So we should be bringing in behavioural safety because it allows us to bring in ideas on behavioural management to progress our thinking and it requires us directly to be involved, students and staff together and it fits beautifully Ofsted. I don't want to bore you talking about Ofsted endlessly but Ofsted have various guidelines for grade 1 criteria and the key thing that they want to see is that learners should be aware of their own duties and responsibilities in creating a safe environment for everyone. So you can immediately see behavioural safety fits perfectly.

This is criteria for achieving an Ofsted grade 1 outstanding grade. A learner should be making a very good contribution to reviewing and improving arrangements to ensure that they are safe and they are confident any concerns will be dealt with quickly and effectively.

When I took over this job as the Manager I wrote a whole new set of service standards and part of it was built on the Ofsted grade 1 criteria, I said there's no point in aiming below that, this is what we'll go for. And all the Technicians know they are meant to listen to the students, they're meant to engage with the students, they're meant to learn from student feedback and so on.

Now as you've seen sometimes they have a very low awareness, sometimes students are just immature, sometimes they just think they're completely invincible – we see that a lot – but one of my biggest problems are the ones that are mature, they're guys like us and they go back into education and because they've done stuff they say well I know what I'm doing so I won't wear the PPE, I'm not going to do this like that, I'm not going to wear the clothes, it's a real problem.

And guidance can be a very difficult thing as you probably know, you can't be patronising and so many students because we're in an age where they're not told no, they're not told they've failed till they get things like a driving test, they

think you're patronising them almost when you open your mouth and you have to write things in a very, very careful way to get things across to them and they have different sensitivities as I've said earlier.

So we have to work out what motivates the students and they have to decide that they want to change and this is what I call our virtuous circle. Now hands up how many of you have got children that are between 15 and 25; yeah a fair number. Do you know one of the things I said to my sons, a smart person learns from other people's mistakes, they don't make their own. Does it work? No, never.

We have to tell students we value their work and the effort it takes to produce it. Now most students these days and you'll know this, if they're between 15 and 25, if they have to walk more than three feet or go up a flight of stairs or spend more than five minutes doing something it's a mission, it's really hard, gosh they're working hard. In terms of the art side, I know perfectly well that a student can take a piece of chewing gum, whack it on the floor of a gallery and sign it and say that's an artwork, you know and we have to say we really value your creative drive you know, but you have to do that, you have to talk to them and say we value the work you're doing, the effort it takes to create it, let's look at what you're doing and we have to get them engaged to consider what risks exist.

And I always think that the best way around that is to turn it around and say well supposing you walk in and I'm doing what you're doing, what would you notice? Would you see anything that's unsafe? What would you think? And when you've got them doing that you can say well how would you change that? How would you make it safer? So this is about encouraging them to share the design of their own controls. And then of course we have to thank them for being responsibly involved because that encourages more of them to get involved in the first place.

So I think this is a fantastic tool to promote safety. Staff can see why cutting corners even once sets a permanent bad example. I mean I really took stuff home from the conference last year, in fact what I will say about Tim is I asked

him a couple of questions, he was very gracious and gave me a whole hour of his time last year and we talked quite a few things through. And I saw the picture of Gordon Brown, I've used one of Obama doing exactly the same thing, making the same point. The thing that I learnt was you can do all the right things but you come to a day where you say look, just this once we're going to do it like this, what students learn and what your employees learn is that's an excuse you can always use under those circumstances.

So it's been a very useful tool for me for my technicians to say you can't cut the corner because they will, they'll see you doing it and they'll know under those circumstances they can do it. And obviously in a learning environment we're here to inspire.

Now another thing that we did, I took James Reason's points to heart, I took the 'no name no blame', I took it back to the Health & Safety Committee and I said this is what we need to do, the 'no name no blame' is going to work and there's been a couple of incidents we've actually been investigating in the last year and one of them involved we had to go and interview about five people recently and the first thing we did was we said we're not here to blame you, we're not here to find fault, what we want to do is we want to find out what actually happened. This is so that we can build things in so it won't happen again. And actually the relief I saw in people's faces when they realised we weren't after them, it did work, they really did open up and they were much more relaxed and they did tell us what we needed to know.

So we have moved, we've actually got this idea going now in the Senior Management at the second level, middle management level, in the HR part that looks at accident investigation and so on, they've all got this idea now and it works. So we don't hit people over the head anymore because we know from what I've been learning that that doesn't work and the open culture does.

[film clip]

This is our kind of approach and it's very exciting for us because we are almost pioneering this in a way. I have got some of those Health & Safety

Managers at ACER now to start looking at the idea and take it away with them but its still early days in terms of our sector for this but its clearly where we should go so its all about the planning, its all about talking and involving people at the bottom.

I think there are only two people from education here today so you know obviously self assessments and personal development reviews and so on and I know you all understand about the training process and cascading. But this is the idea, create the best fit model so that everybody's working together to evolve student perception. Clearly the more we collaborate, the more we listen to them the more we get them involved and the more open we are and how just we are we will achieve more.

So what are the benefits to you as employers?

[film clip]

This is what we want to achieve and I think this works for you just as much as it does for me because you can take the word student out and put employees in. A learning environment where all participants can influence and participate in leading health and safety at all levels and by the way that staff constantly demonstrate safe practice and professional skills as that good motivating example to inspire students or to inspire employees to modify their behaviour and raise their standards.

Now the way that I see it, what we need to do in the College vocational environment is just the same as what you're doing out there in the working world, in the commercial world, we've got the same objectives overall. And if we get the training right for the students, if we get them into this kind of mindset they're ready for what you're doing out there, they're more able to absorb and learn from what you want to give them.

So this is what we've done, I started a behavioural safety programme, I've run inductions through about 57 of my staff, I've got one on maternity leave, one on sick leave, presentations to all the academic Heads of centres, they're

really getting this now, they're starting to look at how they can build this into their courses and the Directors. I've made presentations to the Training Managers and took Principals to a Health & Safety Committee. I've already talked about the 'no name no blame', that's how we're investigating accidents now, which is really, really good and I did DuPont Safe Start Training, Train the Trainer training.

How many of you have done that? Yeah there are a couple of you. I thought this was really good. They describe it as another tool, it doesn't replace your health and safety but its another tool and basically its got some really simple principles, its about developing you to a point where you recognise that you're putting yourself in vulnerable situations and the key parts of it are that you develop so that you can keep your eyes on a task, your mind on a task, maintain your balance, traction and grip and get out of the line of fire. It's that simple.

What I really like about it is its holistic, its not just in your working environment but it actually encourages you to take it out, it encourages you to do things when you're driving, it encourages you to do stuff when you're at home.

Now I don't work for DuPont at all, I'm not here to promote them but I really like that and I thought this is really good to adopt as part of this training programme, I can bring this in, do this with the staff, it'll all feed through and we will have a good behavioural safety programme.

So what I wanted to say to you, the key thing I wanted to say, Ofsted clearly want students to be aware of their part in creating a general safe environment and they require us to work with student feedback. And given we've got huge health and safety concerns every single years, new students every single year, behaviour being a key factor of almost all accidents, implementing a behavioural safety programme works beautifully in vocational education because it means we must be directly involved in involving students and staff to drive down incidents and raise standards and it meets Ofsted criteria. So it works for both of us all the way round.

[film clip]

This is a first for me; I've never actually had to stand up in front of a conference before until now I have to say. I have had to stand up on the floor and ask questions of a few people before, but that was a long time back.

I'll just tell you about an aside to the archaeology bit. Having learnt about the lead coffins, we were digging another site and we had a good day, we hit a burial and we thought cool, because you do, and you start humming Indiana Jones in your head. And it was at the end of the day and they said right don't start digging now, go down, find all the edges properly, dig it out properly tomorrow. And that evening at home I thought okay, I'm going to take in some rubber gloves and some bleach and a bowl just in case, having learnt from the first. Nobody told me to do that, there wasn't that kind of culture.

So the next day, there's me and this other guy and we're digging away and we're excavating this burial and they're getting really excited because its north-south, its not east-west, they think ooh this could be really early. We start hitting the bones and they said this looks a bit odd and we lift the middle part up and there's some sort of calcified tissue on the breast bone and we get to the end of it and there's a pig skull. So they said stop digging and they sent us to another bit of the site.

And I got a phone call that evening and it was from the Director of the Archaeological Trust and he never rings you and he said 'I don't want to worry you but just in case you do get anthrax, its only a million to one shot' and I went oh bloody hell, I thought its got to be less than that.

Anyway we turned up the next morning and they had a back excavator there and they had the army there with a flamethrower and they took all the finds bags, our gloves, they burnt everything. And it was only because I'd done some work before that I actually took the right kit in to try and be safe, you know otherwise I'd have been there bare handed doing all that, so it does make you think you know.

Can I just say that if any of you would like to talk to me afterwards, if there's anything from your point of view in industry that you would like us to do in vocational education that would make more sense to you in health and safety terms please come and talk to me. I've got cards; I'll happily contact you and work with you.

Chair

Before we all break for lunch its worth bearing in mind that as employers that we rely on the education system to produce the next generation of workers for us and I think we all have an impression that education should be preparation for life but health and safety often doesn't feature.

The British Safety Council a couple of years ago put £5 million to one side to develop an entry level qualification for 15-19 year olds at school and the idea wasn't to wrap them in cotton wool or to stop them taking risks but it was actually just a course to enable them to understand what risk was and it's very much as Max said, that often children don't recognise risk until its too late.

So it was about a generic approach to risk and managing risk to avoiding risk and also a generic approach to personal responsibility and understanding what responsibilities employers had for you.

That course went from nobody taking it to 75,000 young people taking it within the first 18 months and the course is still funded by the British Safety Council and its still growing.

But its part and parcel, if we can get these future employees at an early enough age, behavioural safety does the job for us, we'll have people coming in who understand what its about and understand what risk is and will recognise it right from the start.

So I'm very grateful Max for Colchester taking that on and recognising that.

The largest college we have in this country is the Open University and I went up to see them recently and asked them what element of health and safety they included in any of their courses and the answer was there is not a single module on health and safety in the whole of the Open University courses.

And again I can't help but think we're missing a trick somewhere along the line.