

## Focus on the strong sides

I recently been working on a work / life balance program called LifeMetrics.

The backbone of the program is understanding stress and learning to manage it to within acceptable levels. One "pearl" buried within the program is the statement "build on your strengths - manage your weaknesses." It's impossible for me to hear something like this and not relate it to bagpipes.

As some of you know, I took on the PM's role at Braemar last July. This is my fourth such appointment over the years and I'd like to think that I've learned something along the way, as much from my own mistakes as anything else. Like all bands, we have pipers of varying abilities. I have one gentleman who is not blessed with the best hands. O.K. he's cursed. He probably suffered incredible anxiety when I first showed up at the horror of having to play in front of me. Sound familiar? Ironically he had been focusing on his worst attributes for so long that he completely lost sight of his strengths. The man plays on the beat, to the beat, better than anyone else in the band! He's like a freaking metronome, in a good sort of way. As well he blows great tone! To make a long story short, it took me a few months to convince him that he really was good at these things, and now he plays with a confidence that he never exhibited before. We taken some of the work out of the tunes to allow him to play the medley, anchor the beat, and produce great tone. Without putting it into these words, we were "building on his strengths and managing his weaknesses."

Looking back, it would have been very easy for me focus on his weaknesses and to say "he just can't hack it" and cut him loose. Nobody would have blamed me at all. It also would have been very easy for him to adapt the same attitude and walk away. I'm really glad that neither of us did.

So to the point... Pipers can be especially critical of themselves and of each other. I think it's sometimes easy to forget just how difficult this instrument is to play. I think that it's sometimes easy to get down on ourselves and on others. Sometimes we all need a reminder. Here's hoping that you can rethink your own playing and the playing of others with "build on your strengths - manage your weaknesses" in mind.

Good piping  
Ringo