

WHY CAREER SUCCESS ISN'T MAKING YOU HAPPY (AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT)

By Martin Thompson, North Star Labs www.northstarlabs.co.uk



A practical guide to understanding why your career feels off,
and how to realign with the work you're truly meant to do.

INTRODUCTION

Something feels off, doesn't it?

You've done what you were supposed to do. Built the career. Earned the respect. Checked the boxes. And yet—there's this quiet, persistent sense that it's not quite working anymore. Not in the way it used to.

You still show up. Still perform. Still carry the weight like a pro. But under the surface, something's shifted. Maybe it's that nagging little voice asking, Is this really it?—and your only answer so far has been “Shhh.”

If any of that sounds familiar, you're not broken. You're evolving. And this guide is here to help you make sense of that—without having to burn your CV or move to the mountains to raise goats.

Inside, you'll find language for what you've been feeling—and a grounded framework to help you start moving forward with clarity. We call it the DISCO model. It's not a personality quiz or a spiritual awakening. It's a practical, human approach to realigning your work with who you've actually become.

No pressure to blow up your life. No fantasy fixes. Just a first step that feels real and possible.

At North Star Labs, we believe alignment isn't a luxury—it's a form of integrity. People do their best, most meaningful work when they stop pretending and start paying attention to what actually lights them up. That's the work we're here to support.

Let's begin.

A LITTLE ABOUT ME

I've been where you are. I know what it's like to tick all the boxes of success—and still feel strangely hollow. To look around at a life you've built and quietly ask,

“Is this really it?”

And eventually, I stopped trying to silence the voice that kept whispering, There has to be something more. That voice changed everything.

It led me back to university in mid-life to study psychology, chasing a question that wouldn't leave me alone: Why do so many capable, thoughtful professionals feel stuck—even after doing everything “right”? Especially in mid-career, when that restlessness can start to reach a quiet fever pitch.



That exploration turned personal. And then it turned into a project: **North Star Labs.**

At North Star Labs, our vision is that every career decision is inspired by a calling.

Our day-to-day mission is to provide groundbreaking methodologies, tools and encouragement to empower people to uncover and pursue their true career calling, even amidst life's practical demands.

PART ONE

The career you built was right - **Until it wasn't.**



You did everything right.

You built a career, climbed the ladder, maybe even collected a title or two that once filled you with pride - and it looked great on LinkedIn, if nothing else. You've made smart moves, provided for your family, earned the respect of peers. On paper, it looks like success. And for a long time, it felt like it, too.

But now, something's off.

It's subtle at first. You start feeling it on Sunday evenings—that low, heavy dread that creeps in somewhere between loading the dishwasher and thinking about Monday morning meetings looming.

You scroll your phone longer than usual, pour that extra glass of wine, or snap at your kids for no real reason. You tell yourself it's just stress. Just a rough patch. But deep down, you're starting to wonder: **Is this really it?**

Let's pause here for a moment.

That quiet, unsettling question?

It's not failure. It's not weakness. It's data.

It's your inner self trying to get your attention.

Because here's the truth most high achievers are never told: success without alignment doesn't satisfy. A job can check all the boxes and still leave you empty. A career that once felt like a good fit can, over time, begin to chafe. Like a pair of shoes you once loved—polished, professional, broken in perfectly. But one day, they start to pinch. But you keep wearing them anyway because “they go with everything” and you're not quite ready to admit they're quietly wrecking your feet—and your mood. And it's not because the shoes changed. It's because you did.

I know this feeling well. I've built businesses, raised a family, pursued hobbies that, on the surface, should've scratched the itch. But still—there was that itch. That low hum of unease I couldn't explain away. A quiet knowing that there was more out there for me. Not just more success—but more meaning.

If any of these rings true, you might be experiencing what I call “**career misalignment**.” And the signs are often hiding in plain sight:

-  **You dread Mondays**
Not because you're lazy, but because something no longer fits.
-  **You numb out with habits that used to be harmless escapes but now feel like lifelines**
Another glass of wine, another scroll through Instagram, buying more crap from Amazon.
-  **You achieve, but the win feels strangely hollow**
Just like confetti falling in an empty room.
-  **You watch others who seem lit up by their work**
And you wonder why it's been so long since you felt that way.

And still, you stay. Why wouldn't you?

You've built something. There's a mortgage. A family. A reputation. You're too successful to throw it all away—but too restless to pretend nothing's wrong. And then come the fears: What if I fail? What if I'm being irresponsible? What if it's just me?

It's not just you. You're not broken. You're evolving. This feeling isn't a problem—it's a prompt. And ignoring it won't make it disappear. I've been in that fur-lined rut myself—comfortable enough to stay, but just misaligned enough to feel like something was dying quietly inside.

And no—despite what the internet tells you, “quit your job” and “follow your passion” might make for great catchphrases, but they're rarely realistic—and they almost never lead to long-term fulfillment... especially when shouted by someone in a hammock on YouTube who somehow makes six figures selling digital nomad coaching for dogs.

What actually works is something quieter but braver: listening to yourself honestly, getting clear on what matters now, and taking thoughtful steps in that direction.

The good news? That discomfort is trying to tell you something. The even better news? You can listen to it without blowing up your life. You can explore what comes next from a place of clarity, not crisis.

But before we talk about that, let's be honest about what happens when we don't listen to the voice that says, there's something more. That's where we're going next.

Curious if you're truly misaligned? Take our



FREE ALIGNMENT SCORECARD

Answer 18 quick questions to see how well your current work fits who you are today.

PART TWO

This isn't going away, and you know it



You've felt it for a while now.

The quiet discontent. The gnawing question. The sense that your work; however respectable, however successful, is no longer *yours* in the way it once was.

Maybe you've convinced yourself to wait it out. "It's just a season." "Things will calm down after this project." "I should be grateful, plenty of people would love to be in my position. I just need to meditate more, drink less, and become a different person entirely."

But let's be honest: **this isn't going away.**

What starts as a subtle ache—low-grade restlessness, a little envy here, a little dread there—doesn't stay quiet forever. Left unaddressed, it compounds. And before long, that ache becomes burnout. Bitterness. Regret.

I've been there. You find yourself in a rut—a fur-lined, relatively comfortable rut—and it's deceptively hard to leave... It's got good Wi-Fi, regular paychecks, and just enough compliments from your boss to keep you doubting your own instincts. Comfort makes a convincing case for staying put. But eventually, comfort calcifies into feeling stuck. And the longer you wait, the heavier it gets.

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This isn't just about being bored at work or needing a new challenge. Misalignment affects everything. It bleeds into your evenings, your sleep, your health, your relationships.

At this point, your Amazon delivery driver knows more about your emotional state than your partner does. You find yourself snapping at your partner, zoning out at dinner with your kids, pouring that third drink just to take the edge off. Not because you're ungrateful.

Because you're disconnected—from your work, your energy, your sense of purpose.

Over time, you start shrinking. You play smaller. You stop saying yes to new opportunities, not because you're lazy, but because they no longer feel worth it. You question yourself more. You wonder if maybe this is just how adulthood feels. But it's not.

This is what happens when smart, capable people ignore the signals their body, mind, and spirit have been sending them for too long.

“**Because once you learn to listen, everything starts to shift.**”

The research backs this up. Studies show that career misalignment contributes directly to burnout, anxiety, even heart disease. It can deteriorate relationships, dull your creative instincts, and leave you feeling like a shadow of the person you used to be.

And here's the part no one talks about: **if you ignore it long enough, you start to second-guess your instincts.** You hesitate more. You stop bringing ideas to the table. You convince yourself to settle, not because it's what you want—but because it feels safer than change.

That's the real cost—not just stress or exhaustion, but the gradual shrinking of your confidence and your curiosity. The parts of you that used to feel alive start to go quiet.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

What if the discomfort you feel isn't a threat—but a signal that it's time to change something? What if it's not weakness, but wisdom trying to get through? Because once you learn to listen, everything starts to shift.

Because once you learn to listen, everything starts to shift. But before we talk about how to move forward, we need to get clear on what you're actually moving toward. And that brings us to a word that's often misunderstood, misused, and deeply powerful when understood correctly:

Calling.

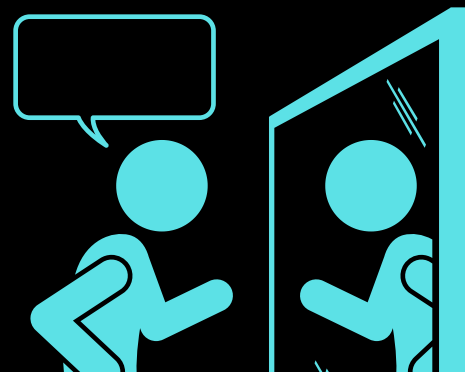
That's next.

Still with me? That restlessness you're feeling isn't going anywhere.



PART THREE

What is a calling?



Let's talk about a word that makes some people perk up—and others roll their eyes: calling.

For some, it conjures divine lightning bolts, whispery intuition, or that one smug friend who “just knew” they were born to be a yoga retreat founder in Bali. For others, it sounds like the punchline to a bad self-help meme: “Do what you love and you’ll never work a day in your life!” (Sure. Unless you love napping, in which case—tough luck.)

So let's be clear: a calling isn't mystical. It's not reserved for monks or musical prodigies or people who cry during TED Talks. And it's not some perfect job wrapped in a bow, waiting to be revealed to you in a moment of divine clarity while sipping oat milk in the bath.

A calling is simpler—and more human—than that.

It's the quiet but persistent sense that you're meant for something more meaningful, more true, and more you than whatever you're currently slogging through. It's a felt alignment between what you're doing and who you are becoming. It doesn't always start with clarity—but it usually starts with discomfort.

Sometimes, it shows up as restlessness.

Sometimes, as envy.

Sometimes, as a very practical question: Can I actually do this for another 10 years without losing my mind or my marriage?

And here's the good news: a calling isn't something you have to “find” like a missing sock. You don't need to burn your CV or hike Machu Picchu for signs. Your calling is more like a direction than a destination. It's less “aha!” and more “hmm... this feels better.” It often starts with listening—to the nudges, the hunches, the moments when something lights you up just enough to keep going.



**This is the unglamorous, deeply real truth:
most people stumble toward their calling.**

Take it from me: I once ran a business that quietly drained me. It didn't crash. It didn't implode. It just stopped making sense. And from that came an idea... which became another business... which eventually became the work I do now. None of it was planned. All of it was honest.

This is the unglamorous, deeply real truth: most people stumble toward their calling. They don't walk a golden path lined with affirmation quotes and inner peace. They try things. They screw up. They adjust. They talk to real humans, not just read books about purpose on the Tube.

So if you're sitting there thinking, "I don't know what I'm meant to do—but I'm pretty sure it isn't this"... that's not a crisis. That's the start.

And if a voice in your head is saying: "This is selfish." "You should be grateful." "People like you don't get to do work they love"—you're not alone. That voice is common. It's just wrong.

Because pursuing your calling isn't self-indulgent. It's actually the most responsible thing you can do. People who are doing work that feels right—who feel aligned, awake, and engaged—are better partners, parents, leaders, and humans. They stop chasing shiny things and start building real, sustainable lives. (They also stop buying random stuff on Amazon to feel alive—but that's a bonus.)

So the next time the discomfort shows up, don't panic. Don't shove it down. And please, don't slap a gratitude quote on top of it and carry on.

Ask instead: What if this isn't a problem to fix, but a prompt to follow?

Because once you ask that question, the whole landscape shifts. And now, you're ready to take a proper look at what comes next—without blowing up your life and everything you've worked hard to build.

What is a calling? (Not the bumper-sticker version—the real one)

A calling is work that feels deeply right, not just impressive on paper, but meaningful in your bones. It has three key ingredients:

1. You feel intrinsically motivated to pursue it. No one has to push you—you're pulled.
2. It allows you to use your unique strengths, skills, and experience. Not someone else's gifts. Yours.
3. It serves something bigger than you. A need, a problem, a community you care about.

It's not a fantasy job title or a magical moment of clarity. It's a direction—one that evolves over time, gets clearer as you move toward it, and tends to whisper before it shouts.

And no, it doesn't require blowing up your life. But it does ask you to stop sleepwalking through it. Starting to recognize that itch for what it really is? It's not a phase. It's not a midlife crisis. It's the part of you that knows you're meant for something more honest, more aligned—more you.

Start by getting clear on where you actually stand.



PART FOUR

What to do next? (Without Quitting Your Job and Moving to a Yurt)



If you've read this far, chances are something's landed.

Maybe it's the Sunday dread. The quiet discontent. The nagging sense that your career—however “successful” it looks from the outside—is no longer a reflection of who you are (or who you want to be).

And maybe, like many people in your shoes, you've had one of two reactions:

Option 1: Numb it out. (Hello, wine/Amazon/LinkedIn doom scroll.)

Option 2: Fantasize about blowing it all up and moving to Portugal to become a kombucha sommelier.

Neither is particularly helpful. (Or sustainable. Or, let's be honest, realistic.)

So here's the middle path—less dramatic, far more effective: start listening to what your discomfort is trying to say. Then start moving. Gently. Strategically. Without detonating your life.

That's exactly why we created the **DISCO model**—a grounded, step-by-step framework to help you move from “quietly stuck” to “genuinely clear” about what's next.

And yes, it stands for something (though dancing through it is optional).

✧ The DISCO Methodology ✧

D

DISCOVERY

This isn't about labelling yourself a “visionary otter.” It's about finally understanding how you're wired to work—your strengths, energy patterns, and what environments actually bring out your best. Most people skip this part. Don't.

I

INTUITION

Your body often knows before your brain catches up. This step is about tuning in—not to fluff, but to the part of you that says this feels right before the spreadsheets talk you out of it.

S

SKILLS AND STORY

Everything you've done matters. This is where we dig into your career so far—not to rewrite your CV, but to uncover the patterns, moments, and hard-earned truths that point toward what's next.

C

COMFORT ZONE

Let's be honest—it's not that comfortable anymore. Here we name the fears keeping you stuck, separate fact from 3 a.m. brain-noise, and design steps that stretch you without snapping you.

O

OPPORTUNITIES

This is where clarity turns into movement. No pipe dreams—just real, doable next steps you can take in your actual life. Because callings evolve. And yours starts right where you are.

And if any part of you is thinking, "This sounds good, but... I don't know if I'm ready,"—you're not alone.

The voice of doubt doesn't disappear. But what if you listened to the other voice—the quieter one—that's been whispering, "There's more for you than this"?

That voice isn't going away. And maybe... that's the point.



FINAL PART The Voice isn't Going to Quiet Down

If you've made it this far, then some part of you knows: this isn't a phase.

It's not just a rough week or a bad manager or too many meetings on your calendar. It's something deeper. A quiet knowing that the work you're doing no longer fits—and hasn't for a while.

And maybe you've been trying to silence that knowing. With distractions. With overwork. With the promise that things will get better after the next promotion, the next holiday, the next quarter.

But here's the truth: that voice you've been trying to quiet? It's not going anywhere.

Because it's not a problem. It's a prompt. It's the part of you that's still awake—still paying attention—still rooting for your life to feel like it means something again.

You don't have to blow everything up. You don't have to walk away from all you've built. But you do have to start listening. And that means taking one honest step forward.

That's exactly why I created a course—a space for mid-career professionals like you to turn discomfort into direction.

To move from “quietly stuck” to “clearly on track,” using the DISCO model as a practical, proven framework.

It's supportive, grounded, and designed for real life. No airy platitudes. No unrealistic leaps. Just a process that works—because it's worked for me, and for the people I've helped walk this path.

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Answer 18 quick questions to see how well your current work fits who you are today.