

SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE FOR SOFTWARE ENGINEERS

Stop *Optimizing* the Wrong *System*.

A focused guide for senior engineers
who are still shipping but running on fumes.

Two exercises. Twenty minutes. One clear map.

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You Know This Monday

You have pushed for years. You deliver. You adapt. You hit targets. And yet the inside feels quiet. Flat. Not dramatic, just off. Like living with the switch turned off.

The alarm goes off. You hit snooze twice. You are not sleepy, just heavy.

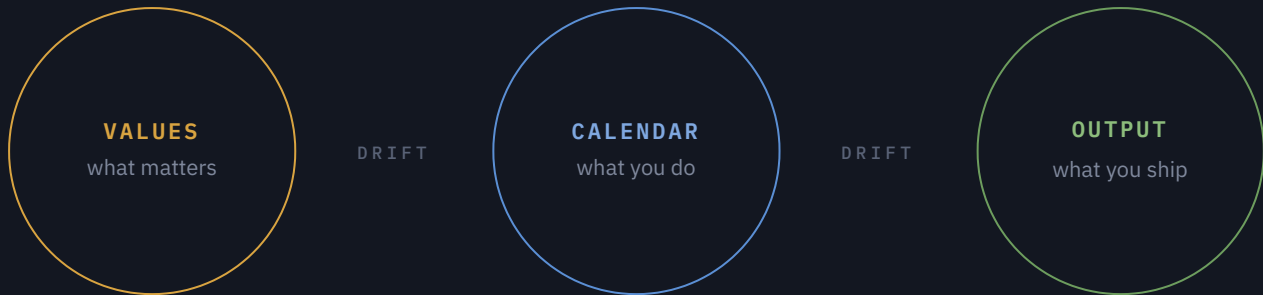
Inbox. Team chat. One quick call. Your attention scatters before it starts. You open a doc you used to love. You skim. You nudge a paragraph. You reply to a few messages to feel useful. Micro wins, no pulse.

By 11:40 you have touched seven things and finished nothing that matters. Lunch happens. Afternoon blurs. You ship something, probably. In the evening you sit down and the day already feels like it belonged to someone else. You have a good life on paper and a quiet ache underneath it.

You are not lazy. You are not broken. You are misaligned.

You have a good life on paper and a quiet ache underneath it.

What Misalignment Looks Like



When these three agree, decisions get clean. When they drift apart, friction compounds.

Misalignment means the three things that should agree, your values, your calendar and your output, have drifted apart. You still function, sometimes beautifully. But the cost is friction: you override your own signals, chase external rewards, and let expectation set your aim.

How does that drift happen? You were rewarded for output, not congruence. Urgency became a habit. Boundaries softened. Over time, "doing more" felt safer than pausing to ask, "Why this?" The lights stayed on, and the work went quiet.

This guide will not try to fix you. You are not a project. It will help you see your shape, name your drift, and choose one honest move. The rest, sustained implementation, deeper patterns, environment redesign, is what the full A.L.I.G.N.E.D. method covers.

If this hit close to home, you are in the right place. The next exercise will show you exactly where you have drifted.

◆ FIND YOUR SHAPE. SEE WHERE YOU HAVE DRIFTED. CHOOSE ONE HONEST MOVE.

01

MAP

Build your Values Operating System: identify the 3 core values that actually drive you.

02

SCAN

Run a Drift Detection scan: rate every life area against your core values.

03

MOVE

Choose one honest action: the smallest change that restores alignment.

Build Your Operating System

♦ THE VALUES OS EXERCISE / 10 MINUTES

Values are your Operating System. Not slogans, not what sounds noble. What you truly prioritize when it costs you, when nobody is looking and a trade-off stings.

♦ STEP 1: SCAN THE LIST

Pick the values that resonate. Circle the ones that feel true, not impressive.

PURPOSE & CRAFT

Truth / Integrity / Excellence /
Mastery / Craft / Depth / Precision /
Pragmatism

MIND & GROWTH

Learning / Curiosity / Clarity / Focus
/ Wisdom / Growth / Creativity /
Innovation

ENERGY & BODY

Health / Strength / Energy /
Recovery / Simplicity / Beauty /
Presence / Patience

RELATIONSHIPS

Family / Love / Friendship /
Belonging / Service / Compassion /
Generosity / Honesty

AGENCY & ORDER

Autonomy / Freedom / Discipline /
Order / Responsibility / Reliability /
Courage / Impact

JOY & MEANING

Play / Joy / Adventure / Peace /
Stability / Prosperity / Stewardship /
Sustainability

♦ STEP 2: SELECT YOUR NINE

Circle the nine that describe you, not your image. Use plain language you would say out loud. If a word feels like a "should", drop it or rewrite it.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

♦ STEP 3: CHOOSE YOUR CORE THREE

From the nine, choose three Core values. These are your non-negotiable drivers this season.

CORE 1

CORE 2

CORE 3

♦ STEP 4: MAKE IT OPERATIONAL

Write a one-sentence definition for each Core: how you will live it when things get hard.

EXAMPLES

Autonomy: Make and keep clear agreements; say no to scope creep.

Excellence: Ship work I am proud to sign, not just busy.

Health: Protect sleep and training; no recurring late nights.

Core 1:

Core 2:

Core 3:

You now have your Operating System.

The aim is not to max everything; it is to know your shape and make choices that fit it. When the shape is clear, decisions get clean.

02

Alignment Scan

♦ DRIFT DETECTION EXERCISE / 7 MINUTES

Turn your Core 3 into a clear picture of where life is drifting. No judgment, just signal and one honest move.

- > Write your Core 3 values in the column headers below.
- > Rate each life area 0-10 on how well it fits each Core value.
- > Circle the area with the lowest average.
- > Choose one small change that moves you closer to alignment.

0-3 = severe drift · 4-6 = partial drift · 7-8 = good fit · 9-10 = strong fit

LIFE AREA	CORE 1: -----	CORE 2: -----	CORE 3: -----
Work	/10	/10	/10
Health	/10	/10	/10
Family	/10	/10	/10
Friendships	/10	/10	/10
Learning	/10	/10	/10
Fun / Play	/10	/10	/10

♦ YOUR DRIFT SIGNAL

Lowest area:

Action I could take:

Boundary I could hold:

Conversation I could start:

Motivation returns when action matches values. One tiny proof today is stronger than more force tomorrow.

This Goes Deeper

What you just completed, the OS exercise and the Alignment Scan, is the mapping layer. The full method is called A.L.I.G.N.E.D.

- A Awareness** Recognize patterns and distractions that keep you stuck
- L Let Go** Release expectations and roles that no longer fit
- I Identify Your Values** Rediscover what actually matters, not what you were taught to chase
- G Ground Your Energy** Rebuild working capacity with intelligent habits
- N Navigate Pressure** Respond rather than react. Hold decision quality under load
- E Execute Consciously** Move forward with clarity, one aligned step at a time
- D Design Your Environment** Build a sustainable system around the person you are becoming

WHAT CHANGES WITH ALIGNMENT

- ✓ Morning fog lifts. The day starts with direction, not dread.
- ✓ Fewer open loops. Decisions that used to circle for days take seconds.
- ✓ They ship before noon, not just before deadline.
- ✓ Renegotiations happen. The conversation they had been avoiding gets done.
- ✓ Evening energy rises from 5 to 7 out of 10. Enough to be present, not just surviving.

WHAT HAPPENS IF NOTHING CHANGES

Without realignment, respectable avoidance compounds. The quiet ache becomes the new normal. In twelve months: the same calendar, the same dull pulse, except now you know what it is and still have not moved. The system does not crash. It just runs quieter, until one day you look up and wonder where the years went.



THE COURSE

A.L.I.G.N.E.D. Course

Want guided implementation? The A.L.I.G.N.E.D. course takes you through the full system with video walkthroughs, live Q&A checkpoints, and a peer community of senior engineers.



THE BOOK

A.L.I.G.N.E.D. The Ultimate High Performance Framework for Software Engineers

The complete framework with 20+ exercises, real case studies from senior engineers, and a structured path from awareness through environment design.

"I was procrastinating on my professional goals. Marcel's powerful questioning gave me space to explore and helped me shift my mindset. I gained awareness about beliefs holding me back. I've now overcome them, and I'm in full action mode!"

Kamal Sharma

ABOUT MARCEL

Engineer, researcher, ICF-certified performance coach. Ph.D. in Medical Imaging (UCL London). Seven years building Augmented Reality applications in industry. MIT Neuroscience for Business.

I lived the pattern this guide describes: high output, quiet emptiness, respectable avoidance. Two hard stops taught me that willpower alone is not enough, and that achievements cannot protect you from misalignment.

Today I bring both worlds together, the rigour of measurement science and the structure of the method, so senior engineers and tech leads can rebuild focus, direction and sustained energy.

Outside work, you will find me on the mat (taekwondo black belt, 10+ years), at the chessboard (20+ years), or behind the drums. Learning is still my fuel. But now it is no longer about proving anything. It is about living aligned.



♦ WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

- > Keep the Core 3 and the scan. They are the input to everything that follows.
- > The book walks the whole method, with 20+ exercises on the same worksheets.
- > The course adds the video walkthroughs and a room of senior engineers doing it at the same time.

Ready to run the full method?

No pitch, no pressure. Start with whichever rung fits.

Read the book

engineeringpeakimpact.com/book

*If this guide created even one moment of recognition,
imagine what the full method could do.*

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This guide is educational material. It is not therapy, medical treatment or psychological advice.