

The Benefits of Working as a “Temp”

Finding Work in an Economic Downturn

11/24/2009

Vic Mangino, MA, MBA, SPHR
President
Reminis

Simplify Your Business. Your Career. Your Life

Have Laptop, Will Temp!



Table of Contents

The Changing Face of Temporary Work.....	3
Tips for Finding Seasonal Temp Employment.....	4
Interview Tips.....	6
The Benefits of Working as a Temp	6
Thinking Tactically When it Comes to Seasonal Hiring	8
Temps Need Care and Feeding Too	9
Specialize.....	10
Join a Professional Organization	10
Join a Social Association.....	10
Exercise	10
Take your Agent to Lunch	11
Participate in Your Local Community Theatre	11
What Makes a Successful Temp.....	11
Flexibility	11
Reliability.....	12
Team Player	13
How to Get Temp Agencies to Work with You	14

The Changing Face of Temporary Work

Routinely asked if temporary work should be listed on a resume, I always give the same answer: Yes! Temporary work is a great way to fill the gaps between jobs or after being laid off. It can also serve as a gateway to re-enter the workforce, enable a career change or help you get a foot in the door to the corporate world. Long gaps between jobs may prevent you from getting an interview; temporary work will fill the gaps, help keep your skills current and allow you to meet people and network while making your resume more attractive to potential employers.

Temporary employment isn't just answering the phone or typing up letters anymore. Temporary employees work as accountants, paralegals, dental hygienists, x-ray technicians, human resource representatives and in many other skilled professions. Harvard grads, MBAs, dentists, lawyers, real estate agents, musicians, aspiring actors and teachers are just a few of the candidates in the temp pool today.

Julie turned to temping when an injury prevented her from working as a dentist. She was placed as a temporary Administrative Assistant at a prestigious medical center where after proving herself, was hired as a Special Project Analyst. This position involved creating and analyzing databases to determine future satellite locations as well as regional advertising campaigns. Julie credits this success to temping.

The face of temporary work is changing. If you're ready to get noticed--start temping! Temping is a personal choice. Whether you temp to explore career options, to get your resume noticed amidst a multitude of candidates, or just to build experience and skills, it's up to you. There are Career Temps who enjoy the flexibility of short-term assignments and the extra money for travel and leisure as well as Transitional Temps who may be moving, want to further their studies while temping or want to change careers completely. Once you figure out how temporary work may benefit your particular situation, it's time to consider how to get noticed by an agency.

Austin, who admits he stumbled upon the idea of temping at a career fair, says "...temping turned out to be the best thing I could have done." A former music teacher looking for steady income and work, Austin was exposed to various jobs by temping until landing his current permanent position at an architectural firm where he works as an Architectural and Engineering Designer. Austin is responsible for drafting, 3D rendering, marketing materials, graphic design, IT support and much more.

Temporary work isn't always easy to get. Candidates with new college degrees are competing with those that entered the workforce right after high school and offer real world experience. Computer knowledge including email, Internet research and Microsoft Office skills are now requirements to get temporary work. Additionally, recruiters want to see soft skills including personality, presentation, attitude and other "fit" factors as well as flexibility on pay and location.

Letters of recommendation, excellent references and continually building your skill-set will set you apart from the competitive pool of talent as well.

Leah decided to explore the idea of temping after being a stay-at-home mom for 14 years. She states, "I lacked a steady, progressive work history. I thought I would have a better chance temping at a company, letting them see my work ethic, capabilities and personality first hand and then hoping it would lead to a permanent job offer." Leah, formerly an Operations Analyst before staying at home with her children, was hired as a Human Resources/Payroll Administrator after temping for just over a month.

Once you are in the door---make a recruiter work for you! Many times recruiters are able to help job seekers get an interview or assignment they never thought possible. Working with an agency recruiter instead of going directly to a company has its advantages. A good recruiter will have solid client relationships. While your resume lacks the ability to reflect what's not written on paper, a recruiter can speak those hidden words, get in your corner and pave the way for you to showcase your talent in person. There are occasions where clients have asked to hire temps after only a week of temping, and temp-to-hire assignments are becoming increasingly popular--it can happen to you!

Tips for Finding Seasonal Temp Employment

Start with a Good Resume

The resume is simply used to present and market your skills. Whether you are seeking a job as an accountant or a retail clerk, a resume is a must-have; don't expect to get far without one. Often when it comes to retail jobs, (the biggest employment sector that hires seasonal holiday help), the applications are tough to fill out and the employer's first impression of you will be your penmanship. Having a resume gives you ample time to craft a marketing piece that really sells your skills. In addition, applications are often poorly designed and rarely give the employer the best look at your background as a job seeker. Many jobseekers that apply to retail jobs often don't think of using a resume and only rely on the application. So make yourself more visible and stand out more than all the other candidates.

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

Always customize Your Resume to the Job you are Seeking

For instance, if you are seeking a seasonal holiday position at a clothing retailer and you had retail experience while in school, make sure your resume clearly states you have X years of experience in the clothing retail business.

When you create a resume for a particular temp job, it is always best to find the similarities between the other experiences you have had and the position you are seeking. For instance, if you work as a customer service rep at a cell phone provider, without a doubt your customer service skills can be directly translated to assisting customers in a retail environment.

Where are the Jobs?

Identify companies in your area that traditionally see a spike in business during the holiday season. For instance:

- Retail stores
- Shipping companies such as UPS
- Hotels and resorts
- Restaurants
- Conference centers that host holiday parties
- Manufacturing companies
- Gourmet foods and specialty products
- Distribution centers for manufacturing companies

It really gets down to identifying the companies in your area and the type of work you are willing to do. If you are going to be giving up time away from your family and friends during the holiday season, make sure you will enjoy the work and the people there.

Start Early

Do not start looking on Black Friday, (the day after Thanksgiving). This is the busiest shopping day of the year and managers will not have time to talk to you nor hire you. They want their staff in place weeks before then, so begin your search before the rush.

Contact and Register with a Couple of Temporary Staffing Agencies

Once again, contact these firms early. Often these agencies have the inside scoop to many seasonal-help positions because they have been supplying talent to these companies for many years. Also, take the extra step to make personal contact with a recruiter at the firm.

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

Interview Tips

When you secure an interview, dress appropriately for the job. At least present yourself in business-casual attire. When you interview, smile and be enthusiastic.

Be flexible with either shifts and/or assignments.

Make sure you have reliable transportation to and from the employer.

Keep in mind that typically seasonal jobs do not pay very much, so make sure you look for positions that will appeal to you. Moreover, there may be some added fringe benefits to working at a particular company. For instance, a lift operator at a ski resort could yield a free ski pass, a sales associate at your favorite retailer could yield employee discounts on the things you have always wanted.

Many times seasonal help can turn into full-time permanent employment. If you are unemployed and looking or are simply in the job market, use this "seasonal help" window as a way to test-drive a company. In just a few short weeks, you can learn much about a company's culture, product and if there are any other opportunities worth pursuing. An employer is much more likely to hire someone that they have used on their staff, (even if just on a temp basis) that they know, like and trust rather than starting a fresh search with many unknowns.

The Benefits of Working as a Temp

Larry Taylor had a brand-new daughter and needed to make sure he had a steady paycheck. He had just moved to Chicago, didn't know the area and didn't have time to spend looking for a permanent job. His solution? Signing on with a staffing agency, which sent him to a small factory where Larry was hired as an entry-level technician. A year and a half later, he was promoted to quality technician, and another year later was made quality assurance manager. He was hired full-time by the company in 2004 and, with the help of the company's tuition assistance program, just graduated from with a B.S. degree in business management. "I knew once I got my foot in the door, I'd make a name for myself," says Larry. "It was just a matter of getting in so I could get a steady paycheck and support my daughter. Being a temp helped get me started."

Larry is not alone. Being a temp is a great way to get started in the business world. You can build your resume, take the opportunity to expand your area of expertise, and see what's available and what would be a good career move for you. There are a number of misconceptions surrounding being a temporary worker. Among them...just what is

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

temporary and what is permanent these days? Many people think that if you're a temporary worker, you go from place to place every few days.

Twenty-five years ago, the average assignment lasted two weeks; today it averages nine weeks. Some agencies have placed employees in positions that have lasted as long as three years on a full-time basis. The idea of what is temporary and what is permanent has changed through the years.

Another misconception is that temps don't enjoy the benefits that permanent employees do--health insurance, paid vacation, sick leave, and so on. This is usually not the case; however, each company has its own rules. But largely, being a temp is no longer like being relegated to the bottom of the employee heap.

Still another illusion many people labor under is that temps temp because they can't find a "real" job. That is also not the case.

People temp for a number of reasons...they enjoy the freedom, flexibility, and constant challenge. They have personal or family commitments they would like to attend to at various times, they'd like to make extra money and gain extra experience--like the schoolteacher who works every summer, earning an extra paycheck and taking her "real world" experience back into the classroom with her. Then there are the students who might start out in their first year of college and temp all the way through graduate school.

Just what kinds of jobs are available for temporary workers? Any position that can be handled on a permanent basis can be handled on a temporary basis, from unskilled laborers to trades people, retail sales staff, manufacturing personnel, even CEOs.

Temps also can earn good money. Salaries are not the minimum wage many might believe. What temps earn is commensurate with their skills and experience. While some temporary staffing agencies, such as those that specialize in office support, secretarial support, and administrative positions for the medical administration field, do not have entry-level positions available, there are many staffing agencies that provide training or internship programs.

In fact, approximately ninety percent of staffing companies provide training at no cost to their temporary employees. Much of the instruction occurs in training centers, classrooms, or personal tutorials, but the majority of companies also supply computer tutorials. Most offer training on basic computer skills as well as on the Microsoft suite of office software, including word processing, spreadsheet and database software. Many staffing companies also help workers with math, reading, English as a second language, resume and cover letter writing, interviewing skills, telephone etiquette, dressing for

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

success, stress management, Internet applications, bookkeeping, collections, sales, and customer service.

Hiring on with a temp agency helps ease the job-seeking process. Many people find it difficult to go from interview to interview without success. This is a wonderful one-stop opportunity and the benefits work both ways. Companies turn to temp agencies for their staffing needs because they can then concentrate on what they do best, and the staffing agencies can concentrate on what they do best. They know the market, they're usually a large regional player, and they can find the right employee, do a drug screen, a background check and can get them to work as faster than a company's own hiring process.

Thinking Tactically When it Comes to Seasonal Hiring

Everyone can probably guess the times of year in which hiring is most and least active. What few understand, though, is how to use this knowledge. Truly understanding the seasonality of hiring can help an independent IT professional an advantage as he or she chooses projects, negotiates terms and plan for the future.

There is a pattern in hiring that's pretty much the same, whether you're in a good market or a bad market. There are some good times to look for a job and some bad times to look for a job. Obviously, the amount of money a company spends on hiring will vary from year to year, but the "curve" of seasonality remains consistent.

No one engaged in the independent contractor life will be surprised to learn that the summer, particularly August, is an unfavorable time to launch a job search. The reason is that many of the contracts require multiple decisions, and the decision makers are not there.

The worst period for job seekers runs from the week prior to Thanksgiving through the end of the year. Moreover, it's not just because of the holidays. It dovetails with the end of the budget year, and people are running out of cash.

Hidden within this second blackout period, however, is a small blip of activity in some companies. There's an unusual uptick a week before the end of December. Some companies require you to spend your budget money because it affects your budget the following year. For instance, in the consulting market, either they'll hire someone who they weren't going to hire before, or they'll pay money in advance for the following year.

Positive hiring trends start in January and spike in March. There's usually a significant increase in activity. Companies who are newly empowered by additional budget money

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

in January have to figure out what to do with the money. It takes them a month to a month and a half. The contracts that result generally start in March.

Following March, there is a gradual decline through June, which is followed by steeper dips over the course of the summer. The early fall is cited as another healthy hiring cycle. The second best hiring period is mid-September through mid-October. People get back to work and things begin to crank again. Understanding the seasonality of hiring can play a crucial role in the way an independent professional negotiates and whether he accepts a given contract. You don't want to have a contract that's planned to end in one of those fallow periods. You want to plan to work through that period or, as you're approaching that period, make an agreement with the client to cut back on your hours, your days or even your billing rate so that you have some money coming in and so you can work through those periods.

The importance of this type of planning is amplified in a down market. Even in a good market, a consultant whose contract ends during a down-cycle in hiring can be out of work for a month. In a poor market, the contractor can expect to be out of work for several months. You have to ask yourself, is it better to earn \$100 an hour for six months of the year or \$60 an hour all year?

What it comes down to is a simple matter of strategy. It's not just a billing rate issue. It's the nature and duration of the contract, and when the contract ends. You have to think tactically.

Temps Need Care and Feeding Too

Let's imagine you have elected to work as a temp and are hopefully enjoying all the benefits that go along with this work style. Sometimes, though, you may feel a bit distanced from others because of the very nature of your work. However, there are some basic steps you can take to minimize your feeling of loneliness.

Working as a temp has so many perks we sometimes fail to realize that we may, by the very nature of our work, experience a sense of disenfranchisement or disconnectedness. However subtle it may be, it can influence the way you feel about your work and, more importantly, yourself. Even if you have a strong personal support group in the form of friends and family, you need to expand that to your professional life.

Temp agencies have associations to which they belong, but trust me, they are not an appropriate professional support group for you. Let me say, first, that I am primarily addressing "temps who type" meaning executive, administrative, accounting, marketing or other support staff in business.

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

Here are some tips for temporaries who are pros:

Specialize

The beauty of support work is that you can work in any field you choose. So, discover one that really interests you, like architecture or interior design or advertising or Internet technologies or childcare or moviemaking or flowers, and ask your agency (or seek yourself) opportunities to serve that industry, temporarily. Even serving as a file clerk can give you a wealth of knowledge about the industry. Temping as a receptionist is another excellent beginning for your specialization. Both positions afford you a real window into the workings of the company. Then, as future temporary opportunities arise, your experience in the field will automatically put you at the top of the list for work. In addition, each time you accept a position in the field, your experience (and your pay rate) increases exponentially. Be sure to let your agent know of your new focus and, if they are worth their salt, they will help you. If they are not, find one that will. There are also temp agencies that specialize in professions like bartending, special events, film support crews and card dealers. Seek those out on the Internet or in the yellow pages under Employment - Temporary.

Join a Professional Organization

This is especially easy once you have decided on your special interest. You do not have to already have experience in the field to join. Just say that you have a special interest in the field and pay your dues (remember the dues are a tax write-off). This is also a good way to make contacts that will encourage opportunities for you. To find a professional organization, log onto the Internet and, using one of the fast search engines like Google or Dogpile, enter keywords relative to your choice to find information that will lead you to professional associations. Check out the professional calendar in the business section of your local newspaper, which will usually list business associations and organizations, along with phone numbers and meeting times.

Join a Social Association

There are some social associations that provide you with support and skills that are very useful in the temporary work place. Toastmasters is a good example. You can learn to be at ease when speaking in public or to any large group that is a real confidence booster. Another example is The Optimist's Club.

Exercise

I cannot stress enough the importance of regular physical exercise. It may not be a magic potion, but it comes as close as anything I have ever pursued. Joining a club or gym is also another way to expand your personal support group. If the clubs or gyms are too expensive, check out your local YWCA as their membership fees and per/class

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

fees are usually very reasonable. Include some of the more rigorous exercise methods in your program also, like Spinning and Speed Walking. Spend the money for a personal trainer for just a few sessions; it can be a real jump-start to an exercise commitment. Try Tai Chi for relaxation and stress reduction. Take Tango lessons. Long, vigorous walks can also clear the mental cobwebs and help you focus on your life's priorities.

Take your Agent to Lunch

On one of your days off, take your agent(s) to lunch (write it off). It is prudent to have a close rapport with your agent(s) if you are a professional "full time" temp. It smoothes and quickens communication between you and furthers not only your work possibilities, but also their ability to satisfy their clients.

Participate in Your Local Community Theatre

This doesn't mean you have to act. Volunteer to paint sets, serve as an usher, "hold book" for the actors during dress rehearsal (especially fun) or sew costumes. It is a great way to meet new friends and be involved in your community through the excitement of live theatre.

What Makes a Successful Temp

Maybe you don't have the greatest resume in town. Maybe the holes you see in your professional experience are wide enough to cause others to question your mental stability. Don't despair. While a strong work history and solid skills will always be important, personal qualities are oftentimes the key to landing employment opportunities.

Over the years, I've placed thousands of temporary employees to work. When two individuals of equal qualification came in looking for work, almost every time the person I'd offer the assignment to was the one who displayed personal qualities that were never discovered in a resume.

The Staffing industry is hectic. The reason is the constant need on the part of employers to find the "perfect" employee. Often this need is an immediate one due to circumstances beyond the employers' control. The smart staffing service specialist responds quickly to a client's request with the right person for the job.

Flexibility

A temporary employee who is flexible is a staffing specialist's dream. This individual is willing to take assignments that are not always what he or she wants. This person

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

knows that one goal is to make the staffing specialist's job as seamless and headache free as possible.

Display your flexibility in the following ways:

- Be willing to adjust your hourly pay requirements, not because you're desperate, but because you're willing to make the process work for everyone.
- Don't lock yourself into rigid hours or days to work. Be open to a variable schedule if it's short term and can get you future long-term consideration.
- Start early and work late if it helps on rare occasions. Your commitment to interests beyond your own will be noticed.
- Be ready to change on short notice. Understand that when you're actually on the work site your job may change from what you originally expected or were told it would be. Go with the flow unless the work is clearly not within your skill set.
- Never accept an assignment only to try to manipulate the hours or assignment duties once you begin work. If you try this kind of behavior, your first work assignment could be your last.

Reliability

If a staffing service specialist had one wish, it would be for temporary employees to be consistently reliable. An unreliable temp makes the staffing service itself look unreliable to its clients. In a competitive market, if you can show the world that you're not only a reliable employee but a reliable person as well, your days of unemployment may be shortened.

Display your reliability in the following ways:

- Show up and complete every single assignment unless a life-threatening emergency prevents you from doing so.
- If the unforeseen happens, call the staffing service as soon as possible to allow time to refill your assignment. The last thing a staffing service wants is an unreliable temporary standing up its best client.
- Be on time for every appointment and every assignment you accept. Forget excuses. Do everything you can to not inconvenience others. Your thoughtfulness will be noticed.

- Be a person of your word. Never accept an assignment only to turn it down later for a better opportunity or for more money. Your reputation will always follow you.
- Always tell the truth. Never accept an assignment out of fear that if you don't you'll never be offered another one. The best temporary employees are those who are up front with the staffing service specialist. They're remembered for their honesty.

Team Player

Above all else, staffing agencies are looking for employees who consider themselves part of the team. You are representing the staffing agency when you're on assignment. Understand that you can make or break a company's reputation by your work ethic and attitude. As a team player, you have the opportunity to advance the interests and goals of those around you. Never miss an opportunity to do so.

Display your team player ethic in the following ways:

- Emphasize through your words and actions that you're interested in helping the team reach its goals.
- Remember that you're a team player and not a team leader, unless you're asked to be one. You may have the greatest ideas in the world, but if you present them in a way that leads others to distance themselves, you're not interested in the team.
- Honor the team leader. Whether it's a supervisor, a colleague or the staffing service specialist, recognize others' abilities. People usually hold positions they more than earned. An attitude of respect will go a long ways.
- Always listen with an ear to learn. Remember that much of what you've already learned came from the mouths and experiences of others. Soak up all the information you can from the team and use it to the team's advantage.
- Go beyond the job description. Ask for more work. Offer your time to a workmate if you've finished your own work. In other words, be the best professional friend you can be.

When all is said and done, to stand out from the crowd of numerous others who are looking for work such as yourself, you have to put others' agendas ahead of your own. By doing so, you'll realize that while a resume is important, your personal qualities can move you to the top of the list!

How to Get Temp Agencies to Work with You

Did you know that today's temporary agencies are no longer placing just temporary workers? In fact, many of the larger, sought-after corporations have exclusive contracts with some of these agencies to handle their hiring. At no fee to you, this temp-to-perm employment alternative means finding the right work and the right company easier. Employment agencies can make a smart addition to any successful job search, regardless of your experience level.

Many job seekers, however, unwittingly lower their chances of employment through agencies by making some common mistakes. You can improve your chances of getting an agency to work not only with you, but **for** you. Follow these simple tips to your success:

- Don't limit yourself to just one agency. Because of companies placing exclusive contracts, it cannot hurt to contact several agencies that place employees with your background.
- Contact agencies by telephone to see if an appointment is necessary before just showing up.
- Treat the process professionally, as if you are interviewing for a job. The agency's staff will be assessing not only your skills, but also your attitude, appearance, and preparation. Be sure to dress professionally, be prepared to fill out an application, and leave children and friends at home.
- Ask what the agency expects from **You**. Don't go through the process of registering and never follow up. Remember that the agency deals with hundreds of job seekers at one time and cannot be expected to know exactly what each individual's availability is at all times. Usually, agencies want available job seekers to call in once a week, some even require daily check-in, so make sure you follow through.
- Find out what services the agency has available. Some can provide you with computer tutorials and classes to assist you in expanding your computer knowledge.

If you are seeking permanent employment, understand that "temp-to-perm" positions have a very high percentage rate of becoming permanent. This trial period, usually 90 days, is not unlike the probation period you would go through in regular employment. Abide by all the rules agreed to with the employment agency and understand that they

© Reminis Consulting, www.reminis.com. All rights reserved. Print production strictly limited to personal use and allowable only if this copyright message is left intact. Any other duplication, alteration, and publishing on any medium such as a website or newsletter without express permission is prohibited. All copyright infringements will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For questions, contact: info@reminis.com. This E-book is provided for educational purposes only.

are your employer. If you secure employment outside of your agency, be sure to let them know so they can de-activate your file and make time for the next job seeker.

Follow the requirements of the agency, continue conducting your job search, and land the job of your dreams. From all of us at “Team Reminis” we hope you found this free EBook informative. We wish you the best of luck and happy job hunting.

REMINIS
SIMPLIFY YOUR BUSINESS. YOUR CAREER. YOUR LIFE.