

Is it Really the Most Magical Place on Earth?

In the eyes of a cast member who's been through Covid and its aftermath, not really.

I pulled up to the drive thru for my occasional iced coffee before work, noticing a typed-out message that was taped tactfully on the speaker reading: “Due to staffing issues, we are closing early, and your order may take longer. We apologize for the inconvenience.”

I sighed and slightly nodded. I knew the feeling all too well. I headed through aggravating traffic in the unrelenting Florida heat inside a car with no air conditioning to a job where I would face the same staffing issues. However, where I worked was known to many as “The Most Magical Place on Earth.”

It's no secret that covid traumatized global markets, but not even Walt Disney World is immune to the troubles. Walt Disney World is now falling victim to short staffing, overworking cast members, and continues to do its best battling the Great Resignation.

[Reuters](#) points out that the entertainment and hospitality sector still lags 9% behind what it was in Feb. 2020. The hospitality industry was blindsided by covid and has yet to fully recover. Disney World, as a monumental worldwide destination spot, has had the world's eyes on it on how it will navigate the uncertain future. Despite park numbers returning to normal pre-covid, things just aren't the same. With higher prices, fewer offerings, more guidelines, angrier guests, and ridiculous hours, Disney is not like it was a few years ago.

Some may ask, what is? Nothing is, I admit, but this is not the bounce back anyone wants.

Take the new reservation system for example. Before the reservation system, anyone with a valid park ticket could enter the park. This was particularly helpful when keeping attendance capped at a certain percentage was necessary. CEO Bob Chapek called the system the

“backbone” of the management the company is utilizing and Chairman of the parks, Josh D’Amaro, said the system was “Here to stay.”

However, guests and cast members alike aren’t too fond of the system as it is difficult to navigate, unpredictable, and prioritizes purchased ticket holders above cast member passes. But, besides even having a slight possibility of securing a reservation, cast members are being worked even harder and treated worse.

[Pew Research](#) cites that low pay, no advancement opportunities, and disrespect in the workplace were to blame for the Great Resignation. Add in being overworked to that mix and you have what have been the reasons I have been eyeing new opportunities.

Unfortunately, Disney World isn’t the highest paying job, and the “magic” doesn’t make up for it. While the pay is decent, it’s not worth the trouble and treatment we as cast members face day in and day out.

Many frontline cast members, those who directly interact with guests for their work, are working more hours to make up for the short staffing. Attractions cast members, those who operate all your favorite rides, have been working 6 days a week and even multiple 12-hour shifts. That’s more money, but at what cost?

One stage technician, one who does everything to load fireworks to making sure the productions onsite are running smoothly, said his crew was working 6 days a week. As someone who studied Theater in college and applied for the same position multiple times to be subsequently denied, it was aggravating.

This illuminates the second issue, no advancement opportunities. The company claims that advancement is not only possible, but quite simple. This isn’t the case. As someone who has

applied (and been denied) to more than 20 applications to jobs within the company in the last year and a half, advancement seems impossible.

The biggest benefit I have received from the company besides the numerous life lessons and amazing people I've met has been the tuition coverage of my master's degree. But even still, I have yet to land a salaried career.

Unpredictable schedules have also been a plight for current cast members. One Food and Beverage cast member was being scheduled everywhere but the venue she had trained to be without notice, prompting a call to HR. The call only yielded a pitiless response that it was like that for all the cast in that line of business and even one CM had been to 7 different locations already. This type of disregard and disrespect only compounds to that faced by guests on an almost daily basis.

Covid brought on an onslaught of push back to rules and guidelines that were later relaxed. However, since then, I have faced more financial hardship, more negative guest interactions, and more frustration with the company in general. Despite being denied over 20 times for jobs that ranged from being in my desired career field to those that could just pay the bills until I could move on, there was always the promise of moving up in attractions or going to another line of business. Sadly, this line of business is extremely competitive and always is a game of who's the best butt kisser and my record card sucked. That isn't who I am and even if it was, the point system (how we're penalized for missing work or being late) would hinder me from doing so. Even still, at this point I feel I am too at odds with the company to be able to move too far up the corporate ladder.

Covid was a dark time for everyone. Working at Disney World during this time seems like a fever dream, but it most certainly happened. Covid only brought these issues to the surface

and if Disney doesn't truly begin to listen to its most important stakeholders (their own employees and guest), they won't be aware of the irreparable damage they are causing.