



The Impact of COVID-19 on the Creative Industry

A report by The Mandy Network

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As the world entered lockdown, the vast majority of TV, film and commercial projects halted production. Crew and production professionals across the US have been unable to work and financially support themselves and their families. The Mandy Network, the world's leading career and networking website in the entertainment industry, surveyed more than 340 film & TV production professionals in the US about their current employment situation.

"The entertainment industry has been hit hard by the Covid-19, but we have seen an incredible amount of resilience and determination in our community. The team at The Mandy Network is focussed on helping the advancement of the industry and supporting our members and their career development. As gears shift towards recovery, we are seeing an increase in jobs being posted on mandy.com. Many are hiring for projects that will soon start, resume or for opportunities that can be performed under self-isolation and remote working conditions. This shift is indicative of the endurance of our industry and we eagerly anticipate the full return of productions and work across the United States." - Philip Large, CEO of The Mandy Network

Main findings:

Cancelled gigs

- Over 51% of respondents believe they will lose more than \$6,000 in income during the period of March 1st to June 1st 2020.
- 59% had a scheduled paid job cancelled.
- 50% had a job they were currently working on cancelled.

Professionals noted that the majority of jobs they had been working on, or planned to work on, were cancelled. The lack of available jobs is a huge issue for them, with one saying: "There isn't any work at all right now. I'm a director and no one is shooting." When asked what their main concern was during this pandemic, one respondent answered: "I am worried that I will have no income for an indefinite amount of time. I also worry about the repercussions of this pandemic for the local TV and film production community."

- 61% of respondents have been working as a Film & TV production professional for more than 10 years.
- 64% of respondents said that their annual income comes fully from their work in the entertainment industry.

With the creative industry in a precarious position, employers are reluctant to move ahead with productions, and those surveyed cited the uncertain climate as a major worry: "I am



concerned with how long it will take the industry, specifically the indie and low budget world, where I get all of my work from, to pick up again.”

The vast majority of film festivals across the country have been cancelled or put on hiatus, and many professionals are experiencing difficulties with audience engagement. One respondent voiced: “Film festivals are turning into online festivals - it’s hard to garner the same impact or support”. Another said: “It is hard to find creative ways to generate content to keep our audience engaged until more episodes can be produced.”

Supporting yourself during the pandemic

- 28% of respondents have no idea how they will support themselves during this lockdown.
- 50% of respondents intend to support themselves financially through government support.
- 25% of respondents will turn to their families for financial support.
- 52% of respondents said that they will use their savings to survive during this pandemic.

Film & TV professionals across many areas of production noted that, due to the current climate, they are seeking work outside of the industry to supplement their income. One respondent said: “Since all of my live event and production work has gone away, I have been delivering packages for Amazon. The pay is nowhere close to what I should be making, but it gets me out of the house.” Another shared: “I will attempt to become trained and certified in a non-creative industry.”

While this may generate income for professionals in the current climate, respondents highlighted that it may not be beneficial in the long term: “Finding financial stability and comfort in a different field would lead to complacency and prevent me from pursuing my creative passions.”

Advancing side hustles is presented as an option for some: “I am working on freelance writing, as I have a strong niche in the motorcycle industry, as well as Instacart and other various side hustles.” Despite the pandemic, professionals in the industry are still expressing themselves on creative platforms that they hope will be beneficial to their careers: “I’m keeping my Instagram page running - it has been the only thing keeping me creatively active at the moment.”

Respondents noted that, while this climate is far from ideal, free time can be used wisely: “I’ve been learning how to use an animation software with the hope of making animated short films during this time.” Another highlighted that professional relationships can still be maintained and that there is a rise in jobs that are aligned to social-distance living: “I’m trying



to help current and past clients work through their communication needs in the crisis. There are also more video streaming jobs.”

Conclusion

The palpable sense of damage felt across the industry is moving to optimism, as we steer from attitudes surrounding the immediate loss of work to how the entertainment industry and its professionals will recover. In a joint letter to their collective members, several of the largest labor unions representing professionals in the entertainment industry, including IATSE, WGAE and SAG-AFTRA, ensured solidarity: “We come together on behalf of our respective memberships to ensure coordination between our efforts to secure relief, financial support and other critical assistance for the working professionals in this industry.”¹

They highlighted ways in which they are supporting their members, and these include “advocating for the inclusion of our workforce in the direct cash payments and expanding unemployment insurance” and “ensuring as many of our members as possible are included in state assistance programs”.

With burgeoning demand for more fiscal support for professionals affected, Congress recently passed a third package of emergency relief legislation, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This bill provides tangible and immediate economic relief for those affected.²

Studios and production companies are releasing best practice guidelines focusing on protecting staff and reducing the spread of COVID-19. Lionsgate recently released their safety guidelines for their new productions.³ The document is an effort to protect staff as they continue to establish new policies and practices to provide a safe working environment for all productions.

Survey methodology

The Mandy Network carried out a survey of its members between April 20th-30th, 2020. The survey was posted on member dashboards and distributed via email. Over 340 creative professionals in the US completed the survey.

1-<https://iatsecares.org/2020/04/20/joint-letter-a-message-to-the-working-professionals-in-the-entertainment-industry/>

2-<https://iatsecares.org/2020/03/27/congress-passes-cares-act-providing-relief-for-entertainment-workers/>

3-<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.castcall.blue-compass.com/upload/958390e6ce547e8307265929a4b745101589809799-1589809801.pdf>