



# The Man from Essence: Creating a Magazine for Black Women

*Edward Lewis*

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## **The Man from Essence: Creating a Magazine for Black Women** Edward Lewis

*Essence* magazine is the most popular, well respected, and largest circulated black women's magazine in history. Largely unknown is the remarkable story of what it took to earn that distinction.

*The Man from Essence* depicts with candor and insight how Edward Lewis, CEO and publisher of *Essence*, started a magazine with three black men who would transform the lives of millions of black American women and alter the American marketplace. Throughout *Essence*'s colorful and storied history, Ed Lewis remained the cool and constant presence, a quiet-talking corporate captain and business strategist who prevailed against the odds and the naysayers. He would emerge to become the last man standing—the only partner to survive the battles that raged before the magazine was sold to Time, Inc. in the largest buyout of a black-owned publication by the world's largest publishing company.

By the time Lewis did the deal with *Time*, a little magazine that limped from the starting gate in 1970 with a national circulation of 50,000 had grown into a powerhouse with a circulation of more than a million and a pass along readership of eight million.

The story of *Essence* is ultimately the story of American business, black style. From constant battles with a racist advertising community to hostile takeover attempts, warring partners packing heat, mass firings, and mass defections—all of which revealed inherent challenges in running a black business—the saga is as riveting as any thriller steeped in high drama, hijinks, and juicy dishing.

In this engaging business memoir, Ed Lewis tells the inspiring story of how his own rise from humble South Bronx beginnings to media titan was shaped by the black women and men in his life. This in turn helped shape a magazine that has changed the face of American media.

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