Susan L. Taylor has been the driving force behind one of the most celebrated African American owned business success stories of the past three decades. She is the senior editorial executive at the venerable communications company and writes the popular “In the Spirit” column each month.

A fourth-generation entrepreneur, Taylor was the founder of her own company, Nequai Cosmetics, before becoming Essence’s fashion and beauty editor and, in 1981, its editor-in-chief. She is the author of three books: *In the Spirit: The Inspirational Writings of Susan L. Taylor*, *Lessons in Living* and *Confirmation: The Spiritual Wisdom That Has Shaped Our Lives*, the latter coauthored with her husband, Khephra Burns. She is also a greatly sought-after speaker, delivering inspiring messages of hope and possibility that encourage us to reclaim and reorient our lives and society and create, peaceful, productive, sustainable communities.

In 1999 Taylor became the first African American woman to receive The Henry Johnson Fisher Award from the Magazine Publishers of America, the magazine industry's highest honor. In 2002 Taylor was inducted into the American Society of Magazine Editors’ Hall of Fame, which celebrates the career-long records of excellence, creativity and impact of a select group of highly influential magazine journalists. Taylor’s visionary leadership was acknowledged when NAACP President Bruce presented her with his first President’s Award in 2006. She is an avid supporter of a host of organizations dedicated to moving the Black community forward. Her passion and focus are on creating equity in education and turning around the nation's failing schools, which, she says are "the pipeline to prison."

Taylor has received more than a dozen honorary degrees from numerous colleges and universities, including Lincoln University, Spelman College, Dillard University, Bennett College for Women, the University of Delaware and her alma mater, Fordham University.

Most recently Taylor has been focusing her attention on the “Essence Cares” initiative. She launched this call to action to the African American community at the 2006 Essence Music Festival. It is a massive mentoring campaign that asks every able adult and our leadership—elected and appointed officials, educators, business, religious and secular leaders and college students—to rally their communities to guide and secure our vulnerable children, The goal is to create the largest mentoring campaign in the history of the nation and increase high school graduation rates among African American students by 10 percent annually.
Taylor is also a cofounder of The Future PAC, the first national political action committee devoted to providing progressive African American women opportunities to hold more federal- and state-level political offices by creating a network of support and funding.