



## Essence Magazine: The Road to Essence Festival

### The Brand Challenge

**Essence** is a monthly magazine for African American Women first published in 1970, its core audience is between the ages of 18 and 49. **Essence** the brand is defined by three bold words: Fierce, Fun, and Fabulous. **The Essence Music Festival** is the nation's largest annual gathering of African American musical talent, attended by over 400,000 people in New Orleans annually.

### The challenge

*How could Essence bring the Essence Festival to their audience, into their communities, on their turf?*

The answer was to produce 5 smaller satellite *Essence Festivals* at 5 very targeted locations in 30 days. Of course, the experience had to be fun, fierce, and fabulous.



## The Deployment Challenge

*Make it Local, Personal, and Hometown Driven*

The challenge was to create a fun and engaging experiential activation that was also inclusive, inviting, and inspiring. The entire project has to ensure that the “festival experience” could be toured to 5 locations, in multiple environments, with multiple local entertainers, educators, entrepreneurs, speakers, and celebrities at each location. It also has to ensure we honored the community, the complexity of the audience, and diversity of the locations.

## The MOGXP check list

- ✓ Live Music Festival in 5 major markets
- ✓ Over 30 days
- ✓ Mobilize and Activate Resources & Relationships
- ✓ 4,500 to 5,000 people per show
- ✓ Major Corporate sponsors
- ✓ Multiple Musical Artists
- ✓ Multiple Lifestyle Workshops
- ✓ Multiple Motivational Speakers
- ✓ Complete Event Management
- ✓ Execute Flawlessly

## The MOGXP Expertise

We're always calm under pressure and our real-world experience allowed us to provide Essence the stability and confidence for them to focus on what's most important to them, their customers, and their brand.

While we could highlight the many operational and tactical challenges that 5 festivals, in 5 locations in just 30 days presented, our collective success was built on elevating the emotional human connection. Our success was built upon honoring the local community, respecting lifestyle intersections, and celebrating the individual. Our objective was to get out of the way and orchestrate a seamless, safe, and memorable experience.

### Lessons, Insights, Practice

- 1. Connections.** It's all about who knows who. When working collaboratively as one integrated team, it's critical to leverage all our collective contacts. We identified, unified, mobilized, and activated the Essence team's human resources and relationships. Knowing who we could reach out to or lean on in a moment of need was critical. Getting the relationships and partnerships on the table early allowed us to build a more nimble, more powerful, and more proactive team.
- 2. Site Mapping & Planning.** At all 5 locations, we performed extensive site surveys. We put both feet on the ground to capture the perspective, the environment, the anticipated flow, and avenues of approach. We observed and created an accessibility plan designed around the daily pedestrian and vehicle traffic. We designed site lines that maximized our focal points and provided unobstructed views of multiple performance stages. Human comfort of 5,000 guests was our top priority, with us introducing and managing elements that included porta-potties, water, misters, climate-controlled tents, emergency medical staff, phone charging stations, and an event help center.
- 3. Peace of Mind -** How to be present with minimal presence. Safety and security is critical, and ensuring that we respected the bias, feelings, and perceptions of our guests was also of paramount importance. We wanted no barriers to entry - no barriers of bias or misperceptions that would make a guest feel uncomfortable.

We looked at security through the lens of our guest and crafted an experience that ensured no one felt intimidated by a sense of “Security.” We embraced the plain clothes security officers over the uniformed police. We embraced Trust and delivered Peace of Mind.

4. **Focus on Local.** Our 5 city tour intersected with a diverse audience in very diverse cities in diverse locations. This was not a one-size fits all project. When an experience is orchestrated and intersects your audience on their turf, you have to respect their environment, and be mindful of their lifestyle and cultural contrast.

You have to be mindful of who the local thought leaders, heroes, entrepreneurs, musicians, motivational speakers, and business people are when you introduce them to the project. We all love to celebrate where we come from, so we took the time to ensure the entertainment reflected the cultural and environmental elements of the audience back to them.