

The Executive Roster:

A Q&A with Latasha Causey of the NASCAR Phoenix Raceway

Profile



In the world of NASCAR, where speed and precision determine wins, a new force is driving success at the racetrack: Latasha Causey, President of the Phoenix Raceway in Arizona.

Causey, the first Black female track president in the association's history, didn't originally envision a career in sports. But then a fateful call came from Julie Giese, Phoenix Raceway's former track president. The two met on a women's panel and quickly became friends. And when Giese pursued a new role in Chicago in 2022, she encouraged Causey to consider taking over as raceway president—opening the door to a new and unexpected opportunity.

A Phoenix native, Causey admits she was initially skeptical about accepting the position in her hometown. That is, until she spoke with her husband, who gave her a reality check. "My husband said, 'If this were one of your mentees, would you ever tell them to close the door on an opportunity before they've ever even explored it?,'" she told Korn Ferry. "I'm like, 'I hate to tell you you're right, but I guess I will.'"

Since then, she has shown remarkable leadership at Phoenix Raceway; in 2024, the *Sports Business Journal* honored her as one of its "Game Changers" of the year. In an interview with Korn Ferry, Causey shares her vision, challenges, and the strides she is making to ensure that the spirit of inclusivity extends from the drivers to the very heart of the community.

Korn Ferry: What inspired you to pursue a career in NASCAR?

Latasha Causey: I love sports. I love everything about sports. I'll go to any sporting event at least once to check it out, but I never thought that I would make a career of it or be somebody leading something so fantastic.

If not for Julie [Giese], I would not have thought to pursue a career within NASCAR.

For a long time, Julie was the only woman running a Raceway. So, there were a lot of first thoughts, to be honest. My first question to Julie was, "You know, I'm black, right?" So, that was my first question. Then, honestly, I [thought], "Well, maybe this is it for me. Maybe I can." ... [It] was one of the best decisions I've made in my career.

Korn Ferry: We know from our research that Black leaders—and Black women in particular—feel an added pressure to "perform" compared to their White peers. How does this reflect in your own career and in your role as track president?

Causey: I wake up every day and I've only been a Black woman, right? So, I don't know that I compare myself to my peers on what the difference is for the two of us. But what I will tell you is it's not common for us. It's not common for me to be in this space.

If I'm being honest, how I have grown and developed in my career, it's never [been] common for me to be a person sitting at the table, especially at an executive table. That's just how it is, not just for Black women, but women in general.

I've been in financial services, and I've always been in very male-dominated space[s]. [I've] worked very hard in my career, and some people may not believe this, but one thing that I have always prided myself on is that I always feel like I deserve to be there. I don't necessarily think about the fact that I'm sitting around the table with "the guys." I know the value that I bring, and they need me as much as I need them.

I do think that as Black women, we have other things and other pressures where it gets exhausting. I have two teenage boys. I have two Black boys, and so when you think about that and the world that they [are growing] up in, my worries are less about sitting around a corporate table and more about [making] sure my kids are really good humans [and] have opportunities that others maybe don't have and that they remain safe. That's what I worry about and get exhausted with versus being able to sit around any leadership table.



Korn Ferry: What are some of the goals you came into this position with? And how do you work with other NASCAR track presidents?

Causey: One of my first goals is always just getting to know the team and getting to know the people around me. I hadn't been in the sport, so I was really getting out there and on the road. My first year I spent more time on the road than I was at home. I was getting to know teams, drivers, how the sport works, how I can support, and what I should do to get integrated.

I have been in business for a very long time, and this is one of the most collaborative spaces I've ever been in. You have owners of teams [and] drivers that will call and check in before their race just to say, "Hey, if you need anything let me know," and they genuinely mean that. It's just not something that you get every day.

When you're in the corporate world, it's competition, right? Whereas in NASCAR, if I'm successful, then the teams are successful, then the drivers are successful and it's a holistic approach. So, my goal was just to get in, get to know and understand, and then really be able to put my "sprinkle," if you will, of amazing things that I know we can and will do here at Phoenix Raceway.

The thing that I love about NASCAR is that we all get to work together.

Korn Ferry: Can you share some examples where you've engaged with and benefited the NASCAR community?

Causey: Community programs are what I'm most passionate about.

The Raceway is not far from where I grew up. And I never came to the Raceway until I was an adult, so I wanted to be able to have the opportunity for kids to come and experience the Raceway early. We have so many schools just within the 10-mile radius of our Raceway. We have at least five very large title one schools within that area.

With that, I created a field trip program where we cover everything. We have Phoenix Raceway charities, so we cover everything for kids from title one schools, underprivileged schools, to be able to come to the Raceway and have a day at the track. It's a whole day field trip. They come out, they learn about Motorsports, we have iRacing machines; we have all kinds of things.

We partnered with a good friend of mine, Larry Fitzgerald, and the Larry Fitzgerald Foundation. We do it together and the field trip program is called "Beyond the Finish Line" which is relevant for both football as well as racing. It's something that we put together, and in two years, we've already put over 300 students through the program. We weren't anticipating that we'd have so many people so interested. It's been a phenomenal thing, but that's just one program.

We do multiple community-based programs. It's something that we feel is our obligation to give back to the Community. We can't just take, we've got to be able to give to this community as well, so we do that, and we show up in every way that we can.

Korn Ferry: A Korn Ferry survey shares that nearly two-thirds of organizations report their DEI programs help with employee retention. Why is DEI important and what are some of the changes you have made or plan to make as track president to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for the NASCAR community?

Causey: That's the cornerstone of who I am, whether there is a DEI program or not. But NASCAR has had a DEI program for the last 20 years, we're celebrating that, [and] we will talk about that at our luncheon this year. It's the Drive for Diversity program that we've had for the last 20 years. For me personally, there are people that may be curious and want to come to the raceway, and I think, "what am I going to make sure that everyone feels like they're comfortable and feels like they belong here."

Last year, we created a Viva LA Fiesta zone here in Arizona. Over [30%] of our population in Arizona is of some sort of Latin descent. Primarily, it is Hispanic here in Phoenix. And so, I wanted to create a Viva LA Fiesta zone for our fans. We had food trucks that were very specific to Latin culture, we had Lucha Libre where we had wrestling. We had dancers. We had mariachi bands. We had Danny Suarez out there on stage doing a Q&A, just a variety of culture.

We had a partnership with a group called "Sophisticated Few Cars Club" which had low riders out at the Raceway. Low riders in Arizona are a huge thing. A low rider in general is cool, but we had over 20 of them just on display at the race.

Again, it's about making sure that people really have a feeling of belonging here. And when you talk about DEI and talk about inclusivity, when you're adding these types of things, it doesn't mean you're excluding anything else. It just means that we are all in a space where we can function together and there's a little something for everyone because that's the world that we live in. Why not bring that to our events as well?

Korn Ferry: In another Korn Ferry survey, over a third of respondents shared that DEI advancement is the responsibility of everyone in the organization. How do you mentor and develop the next generation of NASCAR leaders and talent, especially those from underrepresented and marginalized groups?

Causey: The first thing is inviting them in. You don't know what you don't know. A lot of times in our community, especially Black and Brown communities, you only see what's right in front of you because you don't have access.

You don't have access to experience or to go beyond what's directly in front of you. So, really being able to open up that access, that's why we started the field trip program.

But that's also why I go out and talk to high school [and] college students. Anytime someone asks me to come out and have a conversation with future leaders, I make the time to do that. Even if they're not going to become a track president, it's just opening up their minds to know that there is more than what they know or have heard of.

I feel like that's my responsibility and obligation because I'm the first, and I cannot be the last.

And so, I have to make sure that I provide opportunities. I also pride myself on giving the underdog a chance. Most of the time I think if I'm hiring an engineer, of course I have to hire somebody who has that specialty experience. But if I have another opportunity that can give someone a chance, I always think differently, and I encourage my leaders to think differently. Don't hire somebody that's just like you, that looks like you, that makes you feel comfortable. Live in an uncomfortable space and say, "You know what? I'm going to develop this person, and I'm going to give this person a chance."

That's something that I can do and encourage other leaders to do as well.

Korn Ferry: What advice would you give to aspiring women leaders in NASCAR and in sports, generally?

Causey: Sometimes, we just need to take a moment to step back. I know we're so busy all the time with all our demands, no matter what that is. Whether you have a spouse and kids or whether you don't and have other things that are of interest to you.

Just take a moment to slow down and get to know the people around you. Build your network in a way that doesn't seem common. Get into these uncommon spaces and treat people with kindness. It's simple, right? Treat people with kindness, and at the end of the day, get to know people so that one day you can inspire them to be something like a track president or connect them with someone else to do something where they've never been in that space before.

I just always encourage us to slow down long enough to help each other versus being in a space where we're competing with each other. Sometimes as women, we can get in that space, [and] we feel like there's only room for one of us. I always say there's room for all of us. I always say, "bring your girls—bring your girls with you."

**This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

For more information, learn more about [Korn Ferry's Sports Leadership Capabilities](#) and [Korn Ferry's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion capabilities](#).

Authors and Contributors

Latasha Causey

President of Phoenix Raceway
NASCAR

Chloe Carr

Communications, Specialist
Korn Ferry Institute

Annamarya Scaccia

Communications, Director
Korn Ferry Institute

Cheryl D'Cruz-Young

Senior Client Partner, Sustainability & Global Energy
Korn Ferry

Shari Rossow

Omni-Channel Retail Practice Leader
Korn Ferry

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