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# Howe Brothers

Brothers Mike and Geoff Howe have made a career out of building the world's most desired extreme vehicles.

Images courtesy of Howe and Howe Technologies, Inc.

**T**win brothers Mike and Geoff Howe have always been interested in building things. As Mike says, they were always “those kids in the back of science class, blowing things up and experimenting with different kinds of chemicals, trying to understand how things worked.” So as they got older, this passion for building things transformed into their business, Howe and Howe Technologies, Inc., a company that specialises in the design and manufacturing of extreme military-grade vehicles.

The company has sold world-class tracked vehicles to the US Defense, built extreme 4x4 fire trucks, and developed custom vehicles for Hollywood blockbusters like *GI Joe 2* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*. It specialises in robotics, and has even created one of the world's first off-road tracked wheelchairs. The brothers even had their own TV show on the Discovery Channel that focused on their business, called *Howe and Howe Tech: Black Ops Brothers*.

Mike and Geoff spoke to *The CEO Magazine* about how they run the

company day to day, what their proudest achievements have been, and why they focus so much on philanthropy.

***The CEO Magazine:* What roles within the company do each of you hold and how do your talents and skills complement one another?**

**Geoff:** What we have done here is really taken a look at how we work together as a team to instigate an outcome where the sum of our efforts is greater than their individual parts. When we first created this business, our attorney asked us who was going to be the CEO. After looking at each other for a moment, Mike and I both said, “Well, we both are.” From then on, we have been equal partners. Technically, I am the CEO and Mike is the president, but we have equal ownership of our company. We basically split our responsibilities to make it function really well. We are multifaceted in what we each do, but what we said was, “Let's not step on each other's toes, and let's design a business model that will work for us.” I am in charge of all business-related responsibilities, which include

hiring, firing, and financials. Mike is in charge of engineering and marketing. We've divided that up and it's worked very well for the past 10 years now, so there is no ambiguity, there is no overlapping or confusion that stems from stepping on each other's toes.

**What have been your proudest moments or greatest accomplishments with Howe & Howe Technologies?**

**Mike:** Geoff and I have had many proud moments, from breaking world records to having our own TV show, to our creations being named 'Invention of the Year' by *Popular Science*. We've been in blockbuster movies and been among the youngest to ever hold prime-level contracts for the US government. A congressional letter of commendation for our company's values and achievements was even read before the United States Senate and the sitting US President. But, by far, our most proud and humble moment was when Make-A-Wish Foundation called us to inform us that a gravely ill little boy's wish was to meet the Howe brothers. ➤

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- Mike Howe





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This melted my heart and brought tears to my eyes and stands today as one of my most emotional moments. We went on to spend an amazing three days with the little boy named Florian, where he changed our lives.

## How important is innovation to Howe and Howe Technologies?

**Mike:** Innovation is extremely important to Howe and Howe Tech and is something we do very well. Due to Geoff and I having our fingers in the end product, we are able to influence and advance the industry while still remaining far outside the box. It's extremely important to us that we stay on this edge and innovate beyond the bigger companies, because there are plenty of companies that make robots, but none of them make robots like Howe and Howe.

## How do you work with your key suppliers and other partners to achieve success?

**Geoff:** Surrounding ourselves with the best suppliers and partners in the industry has always been crucial to providing the best, most reliable products, which leads to our success. We are honest and open; we don't play any games.

**Mike:** We always do what we say we are going to do. We are very consistent, and that's very important for the suppliers to know. We don't back out of our commitments; we push through to the end. Geoff and I are very honest and open with our suppliers and have built a reputation around that.

## What is your vision for the future of the business?

**Mike:** We have evolved our business model to incorporate the private sector into the military sector. I see a 50-50 split down the middle with 50 per cent military, 50 per cent private sector work. We're really pushing the Bulldog, our extreme fire truck, on the private sector, because the demand is there and it's a fantastic solution. Then we have the military sector, which is coming back very strong



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- Geoff Howe



for us as our robots continue to dominate the competition throughout the continued US Army testing. This recent success over many other larger defence companies has shown that being agile and innovative with an accent on honesty is a winning formula for us. We're excited to continue pushing the envelope in this manner to really make a difference and to see what the future holds for us.

**Geoff:** We are the best-positioned small company for robotics now, because we have been involved in it from day one. We have been at the forefront when it comes to small companies that are adaptable, that create great products for many different industries. We have really found niches; we have found demand.

Leveraging and pushing the throttle down on those niches and growing them so much so that we can start to produce more funding for our non-profit company, Outdoors Again. It is a US\$18 million non-profit program being put together for the building of the world's first outdoor park designed for and run by people that are paralysed. It's unprecedented; never been done before. That's where my heart is; I want to see this park start up. I want to see another park after that, so we have four parks in the US. We have three million people that use wheelchairs in the US, and designing an outdoor facility that is designed for paralysed people, so that they can go and enjoy the outdoors—that's my vision and that's my goal. •