

# Meet Hammerhead, the company creating innovative cycling technology

As part of our new quickfire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Ross McGraw, VP and Head of Marketing at Hammerhead about the future of cycling tech, acquisition and driving forward the future of cycling.

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*Hammerhead* is a cycling technology company that was launched in 2013 by cofounders and childhood friends Pieter Morgan and Laurence Wattrus. The pair developed their love of cycling at school where they formed the high school cycling club, however it wasn't until Pieter undertook a 3,000 mile ride across the US that he realised that the cycling computers at the time weren't fulfilling the navigation needs of most cyclists.

The company is driven by a belief that cycling has profound power to improve both individuals and society. A bicycle is practical and solves many of the problems found in cities – providing a great form of transportation that is quiet, economical, doesn't pollute, is entirely sustainable, and often faster than cars or buses in dense urban settings. This same vehicle is also an elite performance machine, providing deep satisfaction and community to athletes who push themselves day after day.

Using this mission and a desire to create an innovative cycling technology that was missing in the market, the team developed and produced the Karoo 2

cycling computer, which launched towards the end of 2020. The features focused on solving many of the issues cyclists found with navigation, catering for both the keen cyclist as well as the pro athlete. The success saw Hammerhead named as the official cycling computer sponsor of the INEOS team in 2021 on their world tour, and has been on the handlebars of some of the most respected athletes in the industry, such as Chris Froome, four time Tour de France winner, Olympian Michael Woods and Olympic Gold-winning triathlete, Flora Duffy.

## How is Hammerhead disrupting the cycling industry?

The team were determined to address a profound contradiction that they identify in cycling tech: its digital technology is decades behind material technology.

The bikes used at the highest end of the sport are at the absolute pinnacle of material science, using carbon fibre, titanium, and technologies that are otherwise only used for aerospace technology. They're subjected to advanced wind tunnel and aerodynamic testing, and are extraordinarily light.

Cycling computers, on the other hand, are generationally behind other consumer technologies. They are technology adapted from a paradigm built for car GPS units a decade ago. They feel out of place in a sport that's otherwise on the cutting edge of technology, and don't do enough to enhance the riders' overall experience.

Our latest cycling computer, the Karoo 2, is the cycling computer of the future, harnessing technology that has never before been used in the industry. That means a smartphone-like device with Internet connectivity, fully responsive touchscreen, and even a potential app store in time. The team prioritise software updates, taking real time feedback from users and high performing athletes to create bi-weekly updates which not only fix any bugs, but provide measurable improvements and offerings.

## How have the last two years of the pandemic had an effect on Hammerhead?

The pandemic forced many of us to change our work and life patterns, from working from home to looking for a new escape out of the house to exercise.

It's therefore not surprising that the total number of bicycles sold in 2020 was around 3.3 million, a 22% increase on 2019 sales. This boom in the cycling industry is here to stay, with cycling paths in lockdown being made permanent and many of us now considering our own carbon footprint impact when commuting. Within our own business, we've seen a 7x increase in growth throughout 2021.

We also work with high performing athletes as our ambassadors, and have received feedback that developing features within the Karoo 2 software have helped them train with others through the third party apps, either indoors in quarantine or outside, and prepare for some of the biggest events in cycling.

## What's next in store for Hammerhead?

We recently announced the acquisition of Hammerhead by SRAM, one of the world's leading bicycle component manufacturers. Hammerhead is uniquely poised through a partnership with SRAM to take on players such as Wahoo and Garmin in building a connected bike experience.

Together, SRAM and Hammerhead will keep improving the cycling experience, continuing to develop an innovative cycling technology platform to ensure riders can seamlessly integrate with a wide variety of existing hardware and software products and services including both Shimano and SRAM electronic shifting. Other partnerships are in development over the next year with the aim of creating the ultimate 'connected bike', creating an integrated cycling experience to benefit both regular Karoo 2 users and pro athletes.

Ross McGraw is VP and Head of Marketing at Hammerhead

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