

Howler



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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Howler is the consolidation of three events and entertainment platforms that event organisers can use to optimise the planning, promotion, and management of their events. We caught up with Shai Evian, CEO and co-founder and Steve Cuzen, COO and co-founder.

Tell us about your startup business. How did you come up with the idea?

Our team has owned and run two significant event service brands, LiquidChefs and Lounge Around, which gave us insight into the challenges of producing fault-free customer experiences for tens of thousands of people. That's why we started Howler.



Howler is the consolidation of several powerful events-and-entertainment platforms. In a nutshell, it's a middleware technology layer (namely, software that enables communication and the management of data in distributed applications) designed to help event organisers to plan, promote and run events and festivals.

Howler achieves this by giving the organisers:

- greater control over event ticketing, merchandise, travel and accommodation;
- better door control and access management;
- seamless cashless transactions at every bar and vendor on-site;
- comprehensive post-event re-cons; and
- a cutting-edge vendor/supplier settlement engine.

▣ **How did you hear about, and what motivated you to apply for, the Barclays Accelerator programme?**

The prestigious L'Ormarins Queens Plate went 100% cashless with Howler in January 2017, leading us to meet Yossi Hasson, MD of the Barclays Accelerator.

As a result, Howler was invited to submit an application for Techstars: an in-depth 13-week programme to work alongside Barclays, refine our product, identify challenges and opportunities, meet with global venture capital funds, and access top mentorship and guidance from a host of expert partners.



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We underwent a rigorous application process, including multiple rounds of interviews, shortlists, and pitches before 40-stakeholder global panels, and ultimately emerged as one of Barclays Accelerator's 10 "most promising startups in fintech".

▣ **What is the long-term vision for your company?**

To be honest, the events industry in South Africa is ripe for disruption, with dominant players who have been doing it badly for far too long. Howler wants to give back the 'moments that matter', because we believe life is too short, and entertainment too important, to wait in queues or stand at the bar while a favourite band is playing.

Not only is Howler the event organisers' best friend, but we also see it as a multi-faceted platform that allows consumers to find events they love, gain access in minutes, and experience transactional bliss throughout the events space.

In addition, we're inspired by the potential of sharing this solution to a very real issue in Africa; namely, managing event revenue, better understanding event customers, and delivering optimal security and convenience. Howler operates in South and Southern Africa and is in talks with partners in East Africa and West Africa.

▣ **What do you hope to gain/learn from this programme?**

Having been entrepreneurs all our lives, we've had very little 'formal' business training. The Barclays Accelerator is, for us, a way to fix what Howler is doing wrong and enhance what it is doing right, rooted in global best practices.



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We've seen the extent to which entrepreneurs get caught up working *in* and not *on* their businesses, so we hope to be able to: equip our rapidly expanding team with the tools they need to succeed; perfectly package and present the Howler products, and leverage both of these to accelerate the brand into global leadership.

▣ **What are you most looking forward to in the 13 weeks of the programme?**

The mentorship sessions are the most exciting element for us. There are no greater teachers than those who have failed and then succeeded, and the Barclays Accelerator will expose us to lessons from some of the industry's greatest minds.

■ ***What are you most unsure of/nervous about?***

We're still scratching our heads about the practical side of participating wholeheartedly in a full-time 13-week programme, while running our company. But we've never said no to a challenge, and we aren't going to start now. Bring it on!

■ ***How do you define the word "success"?***

For some, 'success' is merely a job well done. For others, it's recognition by others. But for Howler, success is a motivator to achieve greater and greater purposes.

At the same time, we believe that success should be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles one has overcome. Whether in business or life, we often walk a fine line between success and failure. If you're hoping to succeed, you've got to fail – or learn from those who have.

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out [Passing Stories](#)). She is also the editor of [Go & Travel](#), a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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