



PUNCHING ABOVE THEIR WEIGHT

TWO-MAN TEAM MAXIMIZES LIMITED RESOURCES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kevin Brown found himself looking for new opportunities. As a former City of Omaha street maintenance foreman, he started out accepting casual handyman jobs, but quickly transitioned into construction and excavation work.

Based on his past experience, Kevin's work focused on concrete projects. But as new opportunities arose, so did the company's capabilities when his son, Cayden, came on board in 2022 with ambitions to grow the company further. Together, they ventured into underground utilities and retaining wall projects.

No strangers to hard work, the pair were seeking to expand their capabilities two years ago by acquiring new construction equipment when they ran into an unexpected roadblock. Most equipment dealers weren't even willing to give them the time of day. One dealer went so far as to tell them that no skid steers were available for sale for at least the next year, despite having several sitting in plain sight on the lot. Kevin recalls the experience as frustrating and disheartening:

"We walked in, saw six skids sitting there, and they just said, 'No, we're not selling any.' Didn't even want to talk to us about anything else—it was ridiculous."

By contrast, when they walked into Nebraska Machinery Co. (NMC), they were welcomed with open arms. From the moment Kevin and Cayden stepped into NMC's dealership, they noticed something different.

"Initially, we just assumed we didn't belong here," Cayden admits. "We're a small company, but everybody was incredibly nice. They welcomed us and were interested in learning about our business and equipment needs."

The visit led to an invitation to Demo Day, where they had the chance to try out equipment and meet other industry professionals.

"We showed up, and I'm recognizing guys from multi-million-dollar companies that I've worked with, and my son's recognizing people from the city," Kevin said. "The whole atmosphere was so inviting."

“ Cat equipment is just flat-out better. And the people? NMC is just the most helpful dealer for parts and service support that I’ve ever worked with in 20 years. And that’s why we keep coming back.”

– KEVIN BROWN, OWNER
BROWNE INDUSTRIES

At Demo Day, NMC sales rep Carson Canada introduced them to a Cat® 262D3 Skid Steer Loader (SSL), a machine that would become central to Brown Industries’ operations. Kevin and Cayden were renting so many skid steers that they knew it was finally time to purchase one of their own. The acquisition of their first Cat machine came three weeks later during 2022, and they quickly realized how much of a difference owning a machine made.

“The walk-through getting us set up with Cat Financial was super helpful,” Cayden says. “I’m no finance expert, and neither one of us are exactly the best when it

comes to filling out loan applications. So, all the help we received from NMC was really appreciated.”

Adds Kevin: “There’s so much to learn when you start a new business, and this was the easiest of anything that I’ve had to do so far. The entire process was basically turnkey.”

Taking a flexible approach

Word-of-mouth referrals, combined with social media advertising, has helped attract a steady flow of work for Browne Industries, including projects involving underground utilities and site restoration.

One of the keys to Browne Industries’ success has been its ability to remain flexible and keep labor costs down by partnering with subcontractors. With the help of several trusted associates and partnering with subcontractors, Browne Industries has been able to punch above its weight in the construction and excavation business, taking on complex jobs without concerns about the burden of high labor costs.

“We have a good network of people who do the same kind of work we do, and we trade labor with them when needed,” Kevin says. “For example, we have one crew we use a lot, and they’re set up just like us in terms of licensing and city work. So when we need extra hands for a big concrete pour, they come in and help us, and we’ll go help them when they need extra hands.”

This arrangement allows Browne Industries to take on larger projects without overextending themselves.



BROWNE INDUSTRIES

Location: Omaha, Neb.

Employees: 2

Dealer: NMC

Cat® equipment Spotlight: 259D3 Compact Track Loader



Kevin and Cayden Brown



“We’re not big enough to have a huge full-time crew, and we don’t want to carry that overhead. By using subcontractors, we can bring in the help we need, when we need it, without having to keep a full staff on the payroll all the time,” Kevin says.

“We can do way bigger jobs this way. If we’re doing a good-sized driveway or patio, it might just be me, Cayden, and one other person getting everything set up. But when it comes time to pour the concrete, we’ll bring in a half-dozen guys to help spread, float and finish it, and then they’re off to their next job.”

This flexibility has proven especially valuable on projects with tight timelines or special requirements.

“We work around a lot of underground utilities, which means we have to be precise and quick,” Cayden says. “We have a few regular guys, but we rely on our subcontractor network to complete our jobs quickly and efficiently without

compromising quality.”

Helpful attachments & features

Browne Industries has made good use of several key attachments. The breaker attachment is essential for jobs involving concrete tear-outs, driveways, and underground utility work.

“Utility crews will come in and when they set holes or they’re doing underground bores, they’ll only break out the section that they need to, and then we’ll come back through and correct everything and pour back ourselves or have the city do it,” Cayden says. “When we’re replacing a driveway, we put the hammer on our skid, break it up, and then switch to the bucket to haul out the material.”

Cayden likes the ease of connecting and operating attachments with the Cat D3 machines.

“The whole setup for the specialty

attachments is so much easier,” he says. “It’s plug-and-play rather than set up and play. The machine recognizes the attachment and automatically adjusts the hydraulic flow settings, versus me trying to remember an attachment that I only rent once or twice a year for a job.”

Another notable piece of equipment they rented was a Next Gen 313 Small Excavator. Cayden is impressed with the machine’s grade control system.

“It’s like having an iPad with all the machine functions. It tells me my depth and gives me an extra layer of precision that you just don’t get from other brands,” he says. “Back when I was specializing in underground utility work, I was digging on 48-inch oxygen mains, so having that extra control is a very valuable game changer.”

When he was clearing snow in subzero weather, Cayden learned almost by accident that the air suspension seat in his Cat machine was heated.

“We were running straight for about 36 hours, and it was seriously cold outside. A couple of hours in, I pressed a button that activated the heated seat, and it was greatly appreciated.”

Unmatched dealer support

Despite being a small company, Browne Industries has managed to keep up with larger competitors, thanks in part to the flexibility NMC provides in terms of equipment rental and customer support. Whether they needed a temporary machine or a quick repair, NMC has their back.

“When our 262 Skid Steer needed a major repair, I couldn’t believe the turnaround time,” Kevin recalls. “It could have shut us down for weeks or even a month, but they gave us a loaner at a good rate just to help us through.”

Kevin and Cayden were able to pay for the repair with the Cat Card, which they also use for machine rentals.

“When you’re not getting paid for a job for 30 to 45 days, it can be really difficult when you’re a small company,” Kevin says. “Large projects can

substantially inhibit our cash flow. So having the ability to rent equipment with the Cat Card, which has favorable credit terms, is something that has really benefitted us.”

Cayden also cites the ease of working with NMC’s rental team. The first time he used a 313 Next Gen Excavator to tear down a house that was severely damaged by a tornado that ripped through the area, he received some hands-on instruction on how to operate it when the machine was delivered to the jobsite.

“Turner, our rental sales rep, is awesome. Anytime I have a question, I shoot him a text, and he’s got an answer within 20 minutes. One time, I texted him at 9:30 at night because we were working on a parking lot overnight and having an issue with one of the excavators. He called me right back and talked me through it.”

Browne Industries has since sold its skid steer loader and took out a lease with option to purchase a Cat 259D3 Compact Track Loader.

“Both machines are way more powerful than any of the other competitors at the same level,” Kevin says. “But the customer service, man, it shocks me every time we need something, they’re right there for us. NMC makes everything easy, from financing to parts and service.”

For a small business like Browne Industries, it wasn’t just about finding the right equipment—it was about finding a partner who believed in their potential. While other dealers turned them away, Nebraska Machinery Co. saw their ambition and opened the door to opportunities that helped them grow.

Kevin sums it up simply: “Cat equipment is just flat-out better. And the people? NMC is just the most helpful dealer for parts and service support that I’ve ever worked with in 20 years. And that’s why we keep coming back.” **OTJ**

