

# Sat nav prize as college scheme give Russ new direction

ENROLLING on a college's free training programme has given a man a new direction in life.

Russ Perkins, from Eastbourne, was entered into a prize draw for a sat nav when he joined Sussex Downs Col-

lege's Navigate scheme, which provides a range of workshops to help people rethink their approach to work as well as giving careers advice and support.

It is aimed at helping those who are facing an uncertain

time in their employment or who are looking for a new job.

Russ, who worked as a journalist for almost 40 years before recently being made redundant, was given his prize by college principal Dr

John Blake. He said: "During my working career I was office-based for most of my career."

"However, my job role changed and the way in which we did things certainly changed.

"Navigate is now helping me think outside the box."

"I enjoy working with my hands and being in the open air. Perhaps these strands will lead me to a new career."

For more information on Navigate, call **01273 402441**.



**CHIEF:** Darren Fell

## Website to help keep accounts

AN ENTREPRENEUR has set up the UK's first online accounting system dedicated to freelancers.

Brighton-based Darren Fell's new venture, [www.crunch.co.uk](http://www.crunch.co.uk), allows freelancers to manage their entire accounts, invoicing and expenses on a secure and user-friendly website, with the benefit of having an accountant at the end of the phone.

According to Mr Fell, who sold his email marketing firm Pure for £4.5 million last year, the site can save users on average £2,000 to £4,000 annually.

He said: "Our research has shown that freelancers' accounts cost well over £1,000 per year, while we will do the same thing and more for £59.50 per month."

Mr Fell also set up an advice and networking website [www.FreelanceAdvisor.co.uk](http://www.FreelanceAdvisor.co.uk) in February last year, which now attracts 10,000 followers each month.

# Golfing businessman tees off with handy new gadget

PICTURE: TONY WOOD

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**GADGET:** Tony Read, designer and managing director of Ballkaddie

# Rookie designer is on to a winner

"NEW balls, please" may be a tennis expression but a less polite version is heard on golf courses up and down the country.

It usually follows a hooked drive out of bounds or a pitch straight into a water hazard.

Losing a ball is a common frustration in golf and, while having to trudge back to your bag to dig out a replacement may not sound like much, even minor delays can be disastrous for concentration levels.

Now a Sussex businessman has come up with a gadget that makes grabbing a new ball as easy as swinging a fresh-air shot.

Tony Read, who plays off an 18 handicap at his home town golf course, Mannings Heath, dreamt up the Ballkaddie dispenser while working on a new golf bag design.

The tool can be filled with balls and attaches to the golf bag. Players simply flick a switch to get another ball released.

It generated so much interest with bag manufacturers that he decided to develop it as a standalone product.

Mr Read, who runs Business Car Contracting, a vehicle management company in Wivelsfield, said: "I am a keen golfer and always thought there were certain things about the equipment that could be improved so I decided to do something rather than just get frustrated. Having taken

**by SAM THOMSON**  
Business Editor

advice from senior executives in the golf world I visited the 2008 PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando and met with a number of manufacturers.

"The Ballkaddie concept was enthusiastically received and I have spent the last ten months bringing it to life."

Mr Read, who has no design experience, took just ten months to develop the Ballkaddie, working alongside a design company who brought it up to manufacturing standard.

### Patents

The product includes several worldwide patents and Mr Read said: "There is nothing quite like it on the market."

The Ballkaddie caused a stir at the recent London Golf Show and attracted the attention of the Sky Sports cameras.

Mr Read said: "We didn't actually have the product on sale but there was an enormous amount of interest from the public and from corporate buyers."

"It is a great opportunity for corporate branding and I have had a lot of interest from firms about putting their

logo on it." Mr Read is still working on the new golf bag design.

He is keeping exact details close to his chest and would only reveal that it would combine a golf bag, trolley and travel bag.

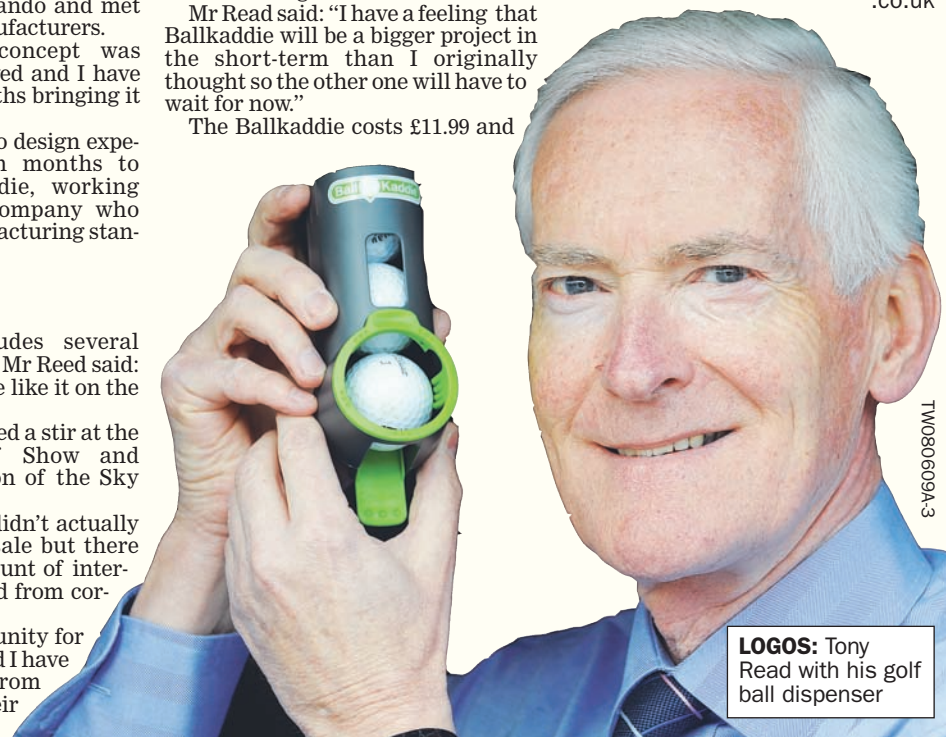
Mr Read said: "I have a feeling that Ballkaddie will be a bigger project in the short-term than I originally thought so the other one will have to wait for now."

The Ballkaddie costs £11.99 and

is available in three different colours.

For more information, visit [www.ballkaddie.com](http://www.ballkaddie.com).

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**LOGOS:** Tony Read with his golf ball dispenser

## Micro-firms fall into the training gap

**MOST** small businesses are not able to train their staff properly.

According to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), micro-firms - those with fewer than five employees - are currently excluded from Government-run training schemes such as Train To Gain.

Many business owners are not aware that subsidised training is on offer and the majority of sole traders wrongly believe they do not qualify to apply for training, the FSB said.

As a result, the organisation has called for the creation of a designated Small Business Sector Skills Council.

## Fit note idea welcomed

REPLACING sick notes with a new "fit note" would be welcomed by firms in Sussex.

EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, said the idea, currently put out by the Government for consultation, would be beneficial to both the company and the worker.

A recent survey on sickness absence by EEF showed an alarming rise in long-term sickness absence, with 36% of employers reporting an increase in the last year.