

An avid golfer, Graham Gibbons was frustrated by the lack of sophisticated practice equipment for putting. Using a roll out green mat with a ramp at the end did not imitate the ups and downs and twists of a real golf green. What was needed was fully contoured, portable putting green.

Graham, a professional design engineer, completed a patent search on his new idea. There appeared to be nothing like his concept on the market. Keen to take his idea forward, Graham visited his local Business Gateway for advice on how to put together his business plan. For market research, he visited several local golf clubs and asked people whether they would buy his product and on the back of this developed a marketing campaign which he estimated would cost £50,000.

In total, he calculated that he would need £250,000 to get the business up and running. In addition to his own investment, he raised £105,000 in private equity from friends and former colleagues and got a promise of a £100,000 small business loan from his bank. Everything seemed to be going smoothly when the bank had a change of heart. He was just about to go into production and was heavily committed to tooling up costs and opening stock when he was informed they would not give him the loan. Fortunately he was able to find a new bank, who came up with £25,000. This still left him £75,000 short, but through careful negotiation with his sub-contractors he was able to limit his supplies to fit in with his cash flow.

Mr Gibbons anticipated that the bulk of his sales would be to private individuals. What has surprised him is the popularity of the product with golf professionals and corporate event organisers. He has kept the company's own operations as simple as possible by outsourcing most major functions including packing and delivery.

[www.linksputt.com](http://www.linksputt.com)



Source: The Sunday Times

## Tea on the Green

Tired of commuting to a job in Camberley, Dawn Knight had taken a job in a tea shop in her local town of Chichester. Enjoying the experience of working in a tea shop, she was inspired to look into setting up a similar business of her own. Working with her husband Dennis, they set up as partnership and spent five years planning the opening of a business. Their aim was to provide a high quality tea and cake experience, with home made cakes and quality china and to enjoy a change in lifestyle.

Initially their thoughts were to take over an existing business but premises were scarce or did not fulfil their ideal style and location.



Eventually they found a run down tea room in Westwood Ho, with wonderful views of the ocean, the location seemed perfect and but was consequently over priced.

Higher funds than expected were required, to not only buy the property but also provide the finance for the much needed renovations. The start-up funds of £50,000, were raised via their own personal funds and a small business loan.

It took six months of hard work before the tea room was ready to receive its first customers. With no budget left for marketing, the couple had no idea how successful the venture would be and relied on passing trade to support the venture. Since then, Dawn's cakes and scones, which she bakes fresh daily, and the tea room's quirky atmosphere have proved successful. Situated just yards from the coastal path, there is steady stream of walkers and hikers providing a strong customer base.

The Telegraph