

- Enterprise  Your Money -

# Ski sling invention puts pioneer in pole position



**Maisha Frost**

THE Trixski, a simple new sling for carrying skis and poles or a snowboard, spares holidaymakers strains and bumps, frees hands and saves their energy for the slopes.

After a successful debut at trade shows this winter, bulk orders are now in the pipeline for the British start-up and its £16.95 “fit, grab and go” solution designed by founder Tricia Blaxill.

Initially she could see the advantages of carriers, but their lack of popularity surprised Blaxill, an experienced skier and therapist.

“It’s very common to see people lugging their kit in resorts – carriers have never really taken off,” she says. “But that’s because most of them are complicated, some have wheels or a thin strap that bites into shoulders and a difficult horizontal fitting like a suitcase.

“I tried to find one that was easy and when I drew a blank I designed my own that is both comfortable and transports vertically; my sister stitched it.”

That was 20 years ago and ever since when in the mountains her carrier drew compliments and questions about where to buy it.

Realising she was on to something her dream for a business crystallised into a goal. In many ways both Blaxill’s product and her own ambitions could not be more in tune with the times.

She launched Trixski after she retired last year, putting £10,000 of her pension savings into setting up, and in so doing became part of the

self-employed and 50-plus UK workforce that is predicted to reach 10 million by 2021.

Similarly, her carrier appeals to many customers who form part of today’s maturing core snowsports clientele, baby boomers and fit-ish older folk able to swoop down pistes for a lot longer than previous generations. “Families too are

buying Trixski, it is hands-free so very useful if you are taking care of younger children and the same goes for those travelling with someone who may have disabilities or with a physical problem themselves,” adds Blaxill. “Our research showed the biggest barrier to people getting the most from the sport was struggling with all the gear. Our hurdle has

been educational, enabling people to see what a difference a proper carrier can make.”

Having worked for larger businesses as well as for herself, she says: “Selling has never been an obstacle for me”

The prototypes path was straightforward. Blaxill found an agent and sent her designs to China where the straps, made of strong, synthetic webbing, are produced.

“It was important they are sturdy as well as light so give good value,” she says. She has now formed an equal share business partnership with marketing expert Alan Chilton-Bates, while her accountant husband Keith does the financials and fulfilment is outsourced.

Retailer Absolute-Snow is among the first to stock Trixski, but the market is broadening with ski hire shops, overseas distributors, school trips organisations and governing body Snowsport England promoting it to its membership.

Turnover by 2021 is forecast for £130,000-plus as a plan to form collaborations with other brands to

create clothing and accessory packages is now underway.

“Trixski is pure enjoyment, for users and for me,” says Blaxill. “It’s all about the future and what the business can achieve next.”

● [trixski.com](http://trixski.com)

## SME HELP CALL

SME bank Aldermore is calling on the Government to help smaller firms and sole traders withstand life’s knocks by creating new entrepreneurs’ savings plans and allowances.

Its latest research reveals many have little or no cash to fall back on. The UK has more than five million self-employed with five million more thinking of starting their own business.

There’s a clear need for them to have more financial resilience, says Aldermore’s savings head, Ewan Edwards: “We want to work with the Government to look at means to encourage start-ups and protect growing small businesses, for example, an Entrepreneur ISA or Small Business Savings Allowance.”

Findings show almost half had less than £1,000 to hand and 22 per cent had nothing.

● [Petition: change.org/p/philip-hammond-aldermore-call-on-the-government-to-do-more-for-britain-s-small-businesses](http://petition:change.org/p/philip-hammond-aldermore-call-on-the-government-to-do-more-for-britain-s-small-businesses)

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**GREAT IDEA: Tricia Blaxill with her Trixski strap which she designed herself**