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# After 30-year quest, Kent inventor finally buys out his sole competitor

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One man's 30-year journey with one technology came to a happy conclusion this week.

Novinium Inc. CEO [Glen Bertini](#) on Thursday said he's happy to be moving into the former headquarters of long-time rival UtilX Corp. in Kent, after Novinium's \$40 million purchase of UtilX last month.

Bertini had a painful split with that company more a decade ago.

"It's incredible!" he said Wednesday [in a Youtube video](#). "We did what we said we would do. I'm really happy to put the band back together."

Bertini and investors in April purchased the somewhat larger UtilX from owner **Willbros Group, Inc.** (NYSE: WG). The new merged company, under the Novinium name, will generate about \$85 million in annual sales, Bertini said.

The technology in question, rejuvenating underground power cables by injecting a proprietary chemical that rebuilds the insulating plastic, is indeed arcane.

But after a few decades, high-voltage power cables degenerate, leading to catastrophic failure, and rejuvenating can cost a third or less than installing new cable.

"It performs brilliantly, until the day it starts to leak," he said of existing cables. "They blow a hole through their side, there's a short through to the ground, and the lights go out."

Together the two competing companies, just a few miles apart in Kent, had dominated the market because of a proprietary chemical that Bertini had helped develop for what become UtilX. After he left that company under a non-compete, he improved the chemistry in order to launch Novinium, which he accomplished in 2005.

Since then the two of them had been fighting for market share, and together had been rejuvenating more than 7 million feet of cable a year, most of it in North America, Bertini said.

"There's nobody else in the world that does it but the two of us," he said. "Now the one of us."

Bertini said he expects rapid growth for his new company, as heavy underground cables continue to age.

"There is a huge backlog of cables from the '60s, '70s and '80s that are at the end of their useful lives," he said. "It's billions of feet of backlog."

He added that while much of the two companies' energy was consumed by competing against each other, now they can focus on growth.

"I'm thinking 15 percent should be our compound growth rate going forward," he said.

The merged company will employ 62 people in Kent, a reduction of nearly 30 people from the combined companies, as redundancy is eliminated, Bertini said. The company employs 325 worldwide

The company is now in the 36,000-square-foot former UtilX headquarters, supported by 18,000 square feet of warehouse space.

(This story was updated with new information.)

Steve Wilhelm covers manufacturing, aerospace and trade for the Puget Sound Business Journal.