

Pole Positioning

Two electricians have a bright idea for a new way to change a light bulb. **BY JESSICA JONES**

HOW MANY ELECTRICIANS DOES IT TAKE TO screw in a light bulb? Thanks to inventors Kerem Tepecik and Dale Vith, the answer is zero, even if that bulb is atop a 30-foot-tall light pole. In the past, electricians with bucket trucks were required to do the dangerous job of changing a burnt pole light, costing property owners several dimly lit days and several hundred dollars.

Just a few short years ago, Tepecik and Vith were those guys with the bucket truck—the co-owners of a still-successful, Dallas-based electrical contracting company called D&K Lighting. In the midst of one otherwise ordinary job, their bucket truck—with Vith in the elevated seat—nearly tipped over, almost flinging him to the ground below.

That's when the light bulb went on.

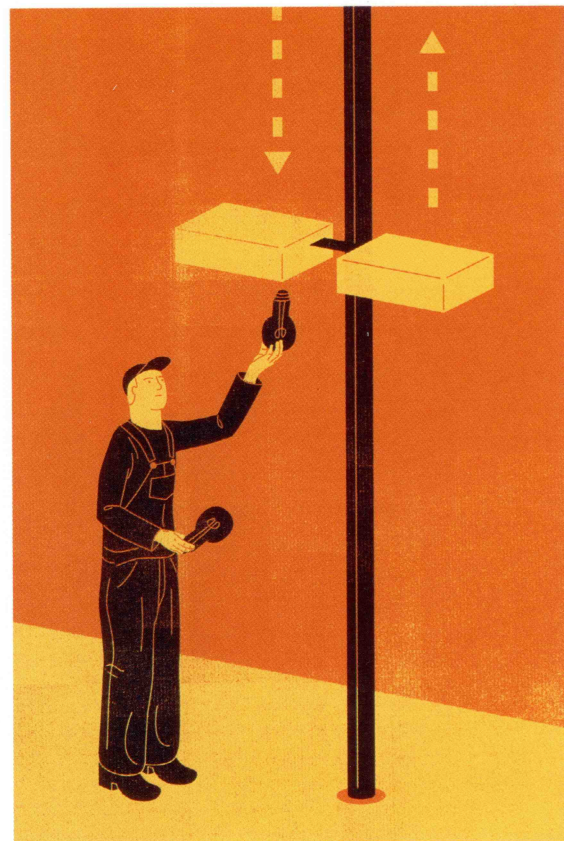
"We were driving back to the office and just got out a napkin and started coming up with some way to bring the light fixture down to the ground rather than bring us up," Vith says.

The duo designed a prototype, using Vith's creativity and Tepecik's electrical engineering know-how. The result was the Retropole: a crank-operated, light-lowering device that disengages power on descent

and can be retrofitted onto any existing light pole no matter its shape, height, or design. Now, anyone can replace a burnt bulb in a matter of minutes. The investment is repaid in two to three bulb changes, with future repairs costing only the price of a new bulb.

"There's also the safety issue," Tepecik says. "You probably don't notice a pole light unless it's out. If you're in a dark parking lot, you may not want to park there. And that can mean a huge amount of money in lost sales if a business has a neglected parking lot."

Retropole, whose customers include DFW Airport, GlaxoSmithKline, and Brinker restaurants, is already available in nearly 200 markets across the country. Tepecik and Vith plan to expand even further to help others see the light.



BRIGHT IDEA:

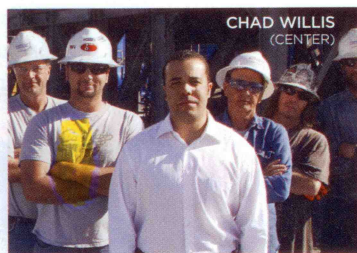
Retropole brings light poles down to earth.

YOUNG GUNS | CHAD WILLIS' TEXAS ENERGY HOLDINGS IS NO LONGER A NEW KID ON THE OIL AND GAS BLOCK.

Chad Willis' company, Texas Energy Holdings, competes against other oil and gas firms that have been in business as long as Willis has been alive.

"It's really unusual that we're so successful," says the 27-year-old president and CEO. Thanks to properties that include Cotton Valley and Barnett Shale, the most active drilling field in North America, TEH has been very successful indeed. Founded in 2003, TEH manages more than \$60 million for about 500 investors, finding oil and gas projects for individuals and institutions, as well as pension and hedge funds.

Willis, a native Texan, is a college dropout who cut his teeth at EarthLink when he was 19. His mentor in the energy biz was Lary Knowlton, father



of a childhood friend and a "proverbial oil and gas guy." Knowlton thought that Willis' technology background would go well with the oil and gas industry. "Oil and gas, most people don't know, is really technologically driven," Willis says. In 2002 when dot-com companies started going bankrupt, he took Knowlton's advice and

worked a one-year stint at Mid-Continent Oil and Gas.

He started his own company out of his house when he was only 23. TEH now has 10 employees and big plans for the future, including a non-profit component Willis hopes to have in place by July. The built-in charity will raise money from the individual investors and make a percentage of what the company raises. Also in the works is a 10-year, \$50 million, Japanese-based oil and gas fund. TEH is projected to have an estimated \$100 million under management by 2008.

"I've made very good money since I was 19 and so I don't think I'm the average 27-year-old," he says. He's got that right. — MELISSA HENRY

CEO COMINGS & GOINGS

MICHAEL G. WALLACE named president and CEO of Genezen Healthcare.

JOE PACK named president and CEO of Moll Industries Inc.

JOHN VELLA named president and CEO of EMC Mortgage Corp.

SHARON MOORE named president and CEO of City Credit Union.

RONALD E. JOHNSON named president, CEO, and chairman of the board of Mortgage Assistance Center Corp.