



## The Futurists

From: [Inc. Magazine, November 2006](#) | By: *Inc.* Staff

From solar panels to clean coal, betting big on the future of energy.

### CoalTek zaps out the moisture, making coal burn more efficiently

Most Americans agree that it would be ideal to retire coal as an energy source. But in a country that burns 1.1 billion tons of coal a year and relies on it for more than half of its electricity, the ideal is clearly a long way off. "Incremental change is better than no change at all," says Chris Poirier, president of **CoalTek**. Founded by an astrophysicist and oil and gas veteran, the Atlanta-based company uses low-frequency, high-power electromagnetic energy to zap the moisture out of low-grade coal, resulting in a sort of designer coal that is more fuel efficient and cleaner burning. This relatively simple process can increase BTU content by up to 33 percent while reducing sulfur dioxide and other impurities by up to 70 percent.

CoalTek kept a low profile until it had a facility up and running. It has that now in Calvert City, Kentucky, where it plans to process two million tons of coal per year. The company also has the distinction of being one of 10 clean energy start-ups chosen for California's \$30 million Clean Energy Fund investment portfolio. Right now, the only competition in the coal-processing field is Evergreen Energy (NYSE:EEE), a publicly traded company that produces a similar product using a different process. With a potential market so large, however, competition is not really a concern. "There could be a hundred of us and we would just be scratching the surface," says Poirier.