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## NEWS

### City inventor gets £17M payout

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A city inventor is celebrating being paid £17 million by domestic appliance giant Electrolux after claiming it stole his design for a vacuum cleaner.

John North, 67, has agreed to accept \$30 million in exchange for dropping a lawsuit against the Swedish manufacturer.

Electrolux said it had decided to settle out of court because it "brought the matter to an end with a known outcome rather than the uncertainty of a jury decision."

Mr North, an engineer, who is based in Norwich, had claimed the company had made a sucker of him by stealing his design for an upright, bagless vacuum.

His design enables the vacuum cleaner to exert greater downward force on a surface than any other device has been able to do so far, giving a deeper clean.

Mr North and his backers filed the lawsuit in 2002 in El Paso, Texas, and had sought £56 million, along with punitive damages, from Electrolux, based on its sales of three million units.

Since going on sale in August 2000, the new vacuum cleaner is believed to have amassed profits in excess of \$100 million for Electrolux.

Mr North said it took him 10 years to come up with his design and claimed the manufacturer conspired to defraud him.

He claimed the company started production of the vacuum without his knowledge after he held a series of meetings with the company about the design.

The award makes Mr North one of the richest men in Norfolk, with a fortune in excess of high-profile high rollers like Delia Smith and turkey tycoon Bernard Matthews.

In return for the money, Mr North has agreed to drop all claims, including future claims against Electrolux.

A jury in El Paso will not now decide the case, where proceedings had been underway since last month.

Electrolux, whose brands include Frigidaire, Electrolux, Weed Eater and Eureka, said it still believed that Mr North's claims had no merit.

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