

Newsday plans to 'end free Web content'

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The Newsday headquarters are seen in Melville, New York. New York newspaper Newsday plans to start charging users of its website, a top executive of the company which owns the daily said Thursday.

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Tom Rutledge, the chief operating officer of Cablevision, which purchased the Long Island-based Newsday from the Tribune Co. for 650 million dollars last year, made the announcement during a conference call with analysts.

"When we purchased Newsday we were aware of the long-term issues facing the traditional newspaper industry," Rutledge said.

"Our goal was, and is, to use our electronic network assets and subscriber

relationships to transform the way news is distributed," he said.

"We plan to end distribution of free Web content and to make our news gathering capabilities service our customers," Rutledge added.

The Cablevision executive did not provide any further details about the plan to charge users of newsday.com.

Newsday has a print circulation of nearly 400,000 and its website averaged 3.16 million unique visitors a month last year according to figures compiled by the Nieman Journalism Lab of Harvard University.

Newsday.com placed 11th on the Nieman list of the top 15 US newspaper websites in terms of monthly unique visitors.

But only one of the newspapers in the top 15, The Wall Street Journal, charges for content online.

Newsday's announcement comes amid a crisis in the US newspaper industry as print advertising revenue declines and readers go online to get their news for free.

Online advertising gains have not kept pace with the decline in print advertising and newspaper owners have been searching for ways to increase revenue.

A Denver paper, The Rocky Mountain News, announced Thursday that it would close on Friday and newspapers in several other large US cities have declared bankruptcy in recent months.

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