

Sony optimistic on 3-D TVs, in-house display

November 26 2009, By YURI KAGEYAMA , AP Business Writer



In this Nov. 19, 2009 photo, Sony Corp. Executive Deputy President Hiroshi Yoshioka, left, and Sony Chief Executive Howard Stringer smile as they show the company's latest products, digital still camera DSC-TX1 and e-book "Reader," respectively, during a press conference in Tokyo, Japan. A third to a half of Sony Corp. TV sets sold annually will be packed with 3-D features by the fiscal year ending March 2013, Yoshioka said Thursday, Nov. 26, 2009. But he acknowledged that what Sony may really need is its own display technology and the ability to make its own TV displays to turn around its money-losing TV business. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi)

(AP) -- A third to a half of the Sony Corp. TV sets sold annually will be packed with 3-D features by the year ending March 2013, a senior executive said Thursday.

But Sony Executive Deputy President Hiroshi Yoshioka acknowledged

that what Sony may really need for its money-losing TV business is its own display technology and the ability to make its own TV displays.

Sony has fallen behind in [flat-panel TV](#) technology to rivals like [Samsung Electronics](#) Co. of South Korea.

Yoshioka acknowledged that having to buy panels from Samsung was one reason why his Tokyo-based company lags in flat-panel TVs that use a new kind of backlight called LED - an innovation that can produce super-slim TVs and clearer images.

Samsung has scored success with its LED backlight TVs.

Yoshioka said in hindsight the panel joint venture with Samsung produced difficulties despite some of the benefits.

"They were a competitor," he said of Samsung, while declining to give details on when Sony may have its own displays.

Yoshioka hinted Sony was planning an upgrade of a different kind of technology called organic light-emitting diodes, or OLEDs, which are different from LED TVs, and generate light on the display's surface and don't have to be illuminated from behind.

Sony already sells an 11-inch OLED TV. But Yoshioka said engineers were encountering technological hurdles for making bigger sizes.

The electronics giant will have a unique product if it beats rivals in delivering a bigger TV with that technology.

"The business is tough without our own displays," Yoshioka said in an interview at Sony's headquarters.

For the short term, Sony has been bullish about 3-D TVs, one area where rivals are also just getting started, and Sony is promising products next year.

With 3-D TVs, images appear to have depth and give an illusion of almost jutting out from the screen, although they require special glasses.

Sony is targeting 20 percent global market share in the liquid-crystal display TV market and 1 trillion yen (\$11 billion) in sales from 3D-related products by the fiscal year ending March 2013.

Koya Tabata, electronics analyst with Credit Suisse in Tokyo, was still skeptical 3-D TVs will sell in big numbers.

"Sony has fallen behind because it had been busy focusing on its restructuring," he said. "Sony has watched global market share getting grabbed by Samsung."

Samsung has had the top [global market](#) share in sales for the last several years, according to Display Search, which compiles such data.

Sony's Yoshioka said 3-D TVs are especially fun for playing games, where Sony has an edge because of its PlayStation business. Sony also has a movie division, and some 3-D theater releases have proved popular.

Sony is hoping to also expand into the battery business for electric cars. Yoshioka said the company was in talks with several automakers, although he declined to give names or details.

He said Sony's lithium-ion batteries were competitive because of breakthroughs after encountering quality problems in its batteries for laptops, which required a massive global recall in 2006.

[Sony](#) is expecting its second straight annual loss for the fiscal year through March 2010 - hurt by sliding prices, the global slowdown and its failure to produce blockbusters products like Apple Inc.'s iPod or Nintendo Co.'s Wii.

The maker of the Walkman portable player expects a 95 billion yen (\$1 billion) loss for the fiscal year through March 2010 - marginally better than the 98.9 billion yen loss the previous fiscal year, its first annual loss in 14 years.

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