

# Nintendo seeks to rev up 3DS with holiday games

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Nintendo President Satoru Iwata, standing in front of an image of a pink-color model of the 3DS portable to woo women users, speaks during a news conference at a convention center in Tokyo, Japan, Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2011. Nintendo is readying an array of video games for the holidays in an aggressive attempt at catch-up for lost time from the sales delay of the 3DS portable machine last year. (AP Photo/Itsuo Inouye)

Nintendo is readying an array of video games for the holidays in an aggressive attempt at catch-up for lost time from the sales delay of the 3DS portable machine last year.

Nintendo Co., which makes the Wii home console and Super Mario and Pokemon games, showed some of the gaming titles featuring glasses-free three-dimensional technology at a packed Tokyo event hall Tuesday.

The year-end holidays and the New Year's gift-giving season will be a key test for the 3DS portable. Game companies make up more than half their annual sales during those months.

Analysts say it cost the Japanese video game maker potential momentum when the 3DS was not ready for Christmas last year. It did not go on sale until February in Japan, and March in the U.S. and Europe, forcing Nintendo to slash its profit forecasts by more than half.

Adding to the woes, the overall gaming business has hit the doldrums recently, as the initial momentum wore off from the Wii and DS handheld, both megahits from Kyoto-based Nintendo - partly because of a scarcity of hit game software, but also because of the advent of other mobile entertainment, such as cellphone gaming and social networking like Twitter.

Yusuke Tsunoda, analyst for Tokai Tokyo Securities Co., was pessimistic about the potential for 3-D gaming on the tiny screen of a portable.

Nintendo also needs to introduce more 3-D games if it hopes the 3DS will catch on, he said, noting that there were no surprises in games shown Tuesday.

"It is OK to sit down and watch 3-D," Tsunoda said, referring to 3-D movies at theaters and 3-D on TV sets. "But when it comes to playing 3-D games, it can get tiring on your eyes the more you play."

Nintendo has sold just 4.32 million 3DS machines around the world so far. Nintendo has sold nearly 150 million DS machines since they went on sale in 2004, outpacing the Sony PlayStation Portable, which went on sale about the same time, and whose cumulative global sales total 71 million.

President Satoru Iwata showed video footage of games in the works, including the popular Super Mario series, that were for 3-D playing without the special glasses usually required for 3-D TVs.

Iwata said the company was doing its utmost to offer a satisfying selection of games to play on 3DS.

He has always said machines never become a hit unless there are hit games people are going to want to play on them.

"We know the hurdle is high," he said. "We will do our utmost to make the 3DS as widespread as its predecessor DS machine."

Iwata noted the DS and Wii had proved popular with women - a characteristic he seemed to think was unique for Nintendo products, unlike offerings from rivals Sony Corp. with its PlayStation 3 and PlayStation Portable and Microsoft Corp. and its Xbox 360.

But he said the 3DS had not been so far as popular with women. He said a pink-color model was going on sale later this year in an effort to woo women.

It was perhaps telling of Nintendo's fading confidence in its in-house games that the climax of the demonstration was for a game by Capcom Co.

Capcom, a Japanese game developer also behind the "Biohazard" games, is readying a spectacular 3DS version of its popular "Monster Hunter" game.

Nintendo usually pushes its own games, but Iwata showered Capcom with praise as bringing out the best in 3-D features.

Sony is scheduled to outline its strategy for portable gaming Wednesday, ahead of the Tokyo Game Show in a suburb, opening to media Thursday. Nintendo generally does not take part in the Tokyo Game Show.

Nintendo has already slashed the price of its 3DS. Starting last month, it cost 15,000 yen in Japan, down from 25,000. In the U.S., the price dropped to \$169.99 from \$249.99.

Such a major price cut so soon after a product launch was unprecedented for Nintendo, underscoring 3DS' struggles.

Once next year rolls around, Nintendo will face competition in portable gaming from Sony, which is putting on sale its PlayStation Vita handheld early next year.

That will cost \$249 in the U.S., and 24,980 yen in Japan, for a Wi-Fi only version, and \$299 and 29,980 yen for a version that will also have a cellphone service.

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