

Ericsson venture integral to Sony strategy: executive

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This photo, taken on October 21 and released by All Things Digital, shows Sony's executive deputy president Kazuo Hirai speaking on the final day of the Wall Street Journal's three-day 'All Things Digital' conference in Hong Kong.

Sony Corporation senior executive Kazuo Hirai said Friday the Japanese company wants to work more closely with its Swedish joint venture partner Ericsson on smart phone products.

But Sony's executive deputy president refused to comment on reports the Japanese giant is planning to buy out Ericsson's half of their 50-50 Sony Ericsson venture.

"Whether it's a joint venture or whether it's not, the Sony Ericsson component is a very integral part of the Sony strategy going forward," Hirai told the All Things Digital AsiaD conference in Hong Kong.

"The most important thing is that we are able to work a lot closer with the folks at Sony Ericsson."

The technology conference is sponsored by the Wall Street Journal, which published a report earlier this month saying Sony was nearing a deal to buy out the European telecom firm's stake in their mobile phone joint venture.

By wresting full control of the partnership, Sony aims to integrate its smartphone operation with its tablet, hand-held game console and personal computer businesses to save on costs and boost innovation, the report said.

Sony was said to be pushing for a deal as competitors such as Apple of the United States and [Samsung Electronics](#) of South Korea forge ahead with closely coupled strategies for [smart phones](#) and [tablet computers](#).

Hirai dodged repeated questions about the report, which he described as "speculation". He added however that the two companies needed to work harder to create a "seamless experience for the consumer".

[Sony Ericsson](#) was created in 2001 and is now the world's sixth-largest cellphone manufacturer with a global workforce of 7,600.

Analysts have estimated that Ericsson's stake in the venture could be valued at more than a billion dollars.

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