

Japan dotcom jailbird back in business

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Maverick Internet tycoon Takafumi Horie, who was jailed for accounting fraud, said Wednesday Japan's online landscape was prime territory for his aggressive style of business.

Horie said he had got involved in around 30 start-ups since being released from prison three months ago, having served nearly two years for hiding losses on the [balance sheets](#) of his [Internet service provider](#) Livedoor.

"Social media such as [Facebook](#) and Line has developed tremendously in the past two years in a way that means I can monetise my intangible human assets and launch various businesses," the 40-year-old said.

Line is a Japanese-developed instant messaging application for smartphones and PCs. Since appearing just two years ago, it has amassed a reported 100 million users.

"It has become easy for me to do what I want to do because of the way the Internet's infrastructure has developed," Horie told the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.

"I am starting up probably about 30 businesses, some of them are already in place," he said, citing a rocket development firm and his dream of sending thousands of paying customers into space.

The flamboyant and outspoken Horie was sentenced to 30 months' jail in 2007 for falsely reporting a pre-tax profit of five billion yen (\$50 million

at today's rates) to hide losses at Livedoor.

A high court appeal the following year was rejected, and the supreme court turned him down again in April 2011.

Horie—a Tokyo University graduate who shook up Japan Inc's often staid ways with his media-savvy persona and hostile takeover bids—has long insisted he was a victim of a hidebound [business culture](#).

He emerged from prison in March weighing 30 kilograms (66 pounds) less and vowing to get back in the saddle.

Horie, who has nearly a million followers on Twitter, told reporters Wednesday that one of his new projects was to use social media to support prisoners seeking rehabilitation after serving their time.

The idea came because social media helped him through the bitter first winter in his unheated cell in the mountains of Nagano, where temperatures dropped to minus 15 degrees centigrade (five degrees Fahrenheit).

"I mentioned the condition in my online magazine," he said referring to a publication he kept going while behind bars.

"Heating was installed in my second year and I was given one more blanket," he said.

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