

Japan's SoftBank says nine-month profit soars 58%

February 12 2014

SoftBank said Wednesday its nine-month net profit soared 58 percent thanks to strong iPhone sales, but third-quarter earnings suffered because of losses in its newly acquired Sprint Nextel unit.

The Japanese telecom giant logged earnings of 488.23 billion yen (\$4.76 billion) after adding 2.28 million new subscribers in the nine months to December.

"This was primarily the result of steady sales of smartphones, especially iPhone," it said in a statement.

Nine-month [sales](#) almost doubled to 4.56 trillion yen from a year earlier, SoftBank said, as it added Sprint to its revenue total, although the unit weighed on [earnings](#) in the three months to December as net profit declined about 13 percent from a year earlier.

SoftBank took control in July of the third-largest US wireless carrier in a monster \$21.6 billion deal, one of a string of acquisitions in recent years.

The company took a majority stake in Finnish game maker Supercell, creator of the popular "Clash of Clans", last year, when it also became the top shareholder of Japanese game developer GungHo Online Entertainment.

SoftBank is reportedly eyeing the purchase of smaller rival T-Mobile through its Sprint unit in a bid to compete with market leaders Verizon

Wireless and AT&T.

Chief executive Masayoshi Son on Wednesday declined to comment on the possible deal, or reports that have said US regulators are lukewarm on the merger.

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Citation: Japan's SoftBank says nine-month profit soars 58% (2014, February 12) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-02-japan-softbank-nine-month-profit-soars.html>

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