

Dish CEO Charlie Ergen steps aside to focus on wireless

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In this Thursday, May 20, 2010, file photo, Dish Network CEO Charles Ergen speaks at the Google conference in San Francisco. Ergen, the founder of satellite TV company Dish, is stepping aside as CEO to focus on the company's wireless business, but he will remain chairman. The new CEO, Dish Network Corp. president Erik Carlson, will report to Ergen. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)

Charlie Ergen, the founder of satellite TV company Dish, is stepping

aside as CEO to focus on the company's wireless business.

He will remain chairman. The new CEO, Dish Network Corp. president Erik Carlson, will report to him.

Dish has substantial rights to spectrum, or airwaves that transmit wireless signals, and has said it wants to build a network for everyday products that have internet connections, known broadly as the "internet of things."

Jefferies analyst Scott Goldman said Tuesday's announcement may be a sign that Dish will build that wireless network. The company could also sell or lease its spectrum rights.

The telecom and entertainment industries are changing rapidly as consumers spend more time watching video on their phones and less time on traditional live TV on a big-screen set. Telecom companies AT&T and Verizon are investing in video, with AT&T buying DirecTV and trying to buy HBO and CNN owner Time Warner. Cable company Comcast has launched a wireless business, selling mobile service to its internet customers; rival Charter plans to do the same. Disney is bypassing the traditional cable system and plans to sell ESPN- and Disney-branded video services directly to customers.

Dish's satellite TV business has been shrinking as consumers "cut the cord" on traditional TV. Its cheaper, online alternative for live TV, Sling, is one of the most popular of its kind and is estimated to have close to 2 million customers. But it faces growing competition from Hulu, YouTube and AT&T's DirecTV Now. AT&T said Tuesday that DirecTV Now had reached 1 million subscribers.

Ergen has stepped away from the CEO role at Dish before, in 2011 . He returned to the job in 2015 .

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