

Sony to launch online download service for TVs

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Sony Corp. aims to launch next year a new online service that will allow people to download content such as music and movies to their televisions and other electronic gadgets, a top executive said Friday.

The move is part of chief executive Howard Stringer's goal of converging Sony's strengths in electronics, such as Bravia televisions and PlayStation game consoles, and content generated by its movie studio and music label.

"This is something I'd like to get off the ground as quickly as possible," said Sony executive vice president Kazuo Hirai, who also heads the company's game division.

The company aims to get the service up and running in 2010 "and earlier in the year would be obviously a lot more preferable in my mind", he said.

While the service is still under development, it may offer users features related to health and fitness or banking, as well as content downloads and the chance to share photos or home movies online.

"One of the things we really need to get into is the whole concept of user-driven content," Hirai said in an interview.

"There already are a lot of services out there but we want to try to bring something that is uniquely Sony to the experience."

The company aims to introduce "evolving" television that delivers new applications over the Internet to people's TV sets.

While some services through the online service may be free-of-charge, users will have to pay for others, possibly paying a subscription for a bundle of premium content.

The service will build on Sony's PlayStation Network system, which already has 33 million registered users and allows owners of the video game console to download games and link up with other gamers.

Hirai said Sony also has high hopes for three-dimensional video games that are expected to appear after Sony launches 3D televisions next year.

"I'm a firm believer in 3D. It really does enhance the game playing experience. There's no question about it. It just makes it more exciting," he said.