

Sony to start selling 3-D TVs in June

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Sony Corp. said Tuesday it will start selling 3-D televisions in June, joining a competitive industrywide push to convince consumers to embrace the technology for their living rooms.

The Japanese electronics giant, known for its PlayStation 3 game consoles and Bravia flat-screen TVs, will offer its fully capable 3-D TV model in four sizes this summer.

The 40-inch and 46-inch versions will go on sale on June 10 in Japan, while the 52- and 60-inch TVs will be available starting July 16.

Although the company did not release a global launch date, Sony Senior Vice President Yoshihisa Ishida said the new TVs will hit stores in the U.S. and other countries around the same time.

The 40-inch 3-D will cost about 290,000 yen (\$3,200), and the biggest 60-inch will retail at 580,000 yen (\$6,400).

Included are two pairs of Sony's 3-D glasses, as well as a camera sensor on each unit that will adjust sound and picture quality based on viewers' positions. A remote control button enables the switch from a regular 2-D image to 3-D.

Sony hopes that 10 percent of the 25 million TVs it aims to sell next fiscal year will be 3-D units.

CEO Howard Stringer has said the Tokyo-based company aims to be profitable in flat-panel TVs and gaming next fiscal year, and is pushing 3-D technology as a key strategy. Interest in 3-D has accelerated recently with the help of three-dimensional blockbusters such as "Avatar" and "Alice in Wonderland," which earned a record \$116.3 million in its opening weekend.

Ishida described the current fiscal year that began last April as a difficult period that forced Sony to focus on restructuring and reversing losses.

"We will go on the offensive in 2010," he said at a press conference in Tokyo.

But the same rivals that Sony has struggled against in recent years, such as South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co., are making similar bets in 3-D and other technologies.

Samsung, the world's best-selling TV maker, began selling 3-D units in South Korea last month and aims to move 2 million worldwide this year. Panasonic Corp. is partnering with Best Buy Co. to fuel sales of its own 3D TVs, which launch in the

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U.S. on Wednesday.

To stand out, Sony plans to exploit its strengths in entertainment, gaming and other products to offer customers a broad selection of 3-D content. The company will release a firmware update to its PlayStation 3 console this summer, making three-dimensional gaming a reality.

"By strengthening the relationships between our content and other products, we aim to create a uniquely Sony world," Ishida said.

Sony will offer two additional, lower-priced models with 3-D functionality. Customers, however, will need to buy a transmitter and 3-D glasses separately. The transmitter will cost 5,000 yen (\$55) and the glasses about 12,000 yen (\$133).

In trading on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Sony shares rose 1.1 percent to 3,330 yen, beating a 0.2 percent decline in the benchmark Nikkei 225 index.

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