

## **Microsoft reveals new strategy for Xbox**

*Seth Schiesel*

*Reaching out beyond hardcore video game players to everyday consumers, Microsoft outlined an entertainment strategy on Monday for making the company's Xbox 360 game console a gateway for movies, television and social networking.*

In a media presentation on the eve of E3, the video game industry's biggest North American convention, Microsoft announced new relationships with the social networking giants Facebook and Twitter as well as Sky, the big British satellite television provider that is a unit of the News Corporation.

Microsoft announced that Facebook users would be able to access their profiles and share photos on their television through the Xbox Live network and that Twitter devotees would also be able to post and read messages through the service.

More far-reaching was Microsoft's new deal with Sky, under which Xbox Live users in Britain will be able to watch live television, including professional soccer, over an Internet version of the Sky service. Not every channel available over satellite will be available over Xbox Live, but the offering will include dozens of stations, Microsoft executives said. Users will be able to watch television in a virtual party room with their friends, discussing the program as they are watching, they said.

Microsoft has long sought a bigger role in home television, going so far in years past as to try to build its own set-top box business. Partnering with Sky represents a back door into the television market. The company has also recognized how Nintendo has expanded the traditional audience for video games with its innovative motion-sensitive controller for the Wii. Microsoft provided the first public demonstration of its futuristic Project Natal, which it hopes will usher in an age of completely controller-free gaming.

Using a sophisticated camera, infrared sensors and voice recognition software, Natal allows users to control a game or other programs, like a virtual painting studio, merely by waving their arms, speaking to the system and moving around.

Microsoft did not say when the technology would become available.

Microsoft also demonstrated some of its coming big games, including Forza Motorsport 3, the suspense-thriller Alan Wake and a new version of its biggest hit, Halo. Hideo Kojima, the developer behind the Metal Gear series, said that the next major installment in that franchise would be available for Xbox 360, a coup for Microsoft because previous Metal Gear games had been exclusive to Sony game machines.

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