



Johnny's changes name to Starto Entertainment

Description

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After months of speculation, the talent agency formerly known as Johnny & Associates announced its new name: Starto Entertainment (stylized in all caps).

Agency officials presented the news in a special video made available to members of Family Club, the company's official fan club, on Friday.

In the video, company COO Yoshihiko Inohara also revealed that self-styled entrepreneur Atsushi Fukuda would serve as CEO.

Starto Entertainment will handle all talent and entertainment business related to the performers and groups under the agency's purview.

Fan club members submitted potential names for the company in recent months.

"The name is derived from 'Star' and 'To,' as in 'to head toward the future,'" the company wrote in an English statement sent to the media Friday.

"It is an expression of our commitment to all our artists current and yet to come; with whom we inaugurate a new era in accordance with their individual talents and personal goals."

In September, the agency announced it would split into two companies in the wake of the entertainment industry's reckoning with founder Johnny Kitagawa's decadeslong history of sexually abusing children.

The other company, named Smile-Up, focuses on helping Kitagawa's victims receive financial

compensation and has no involvement in current business operations.

In early December, officials from Smile-Up announced the company had started compensating victims of Kitagawa's sexual abuse. So far, 23 people have received payments, and the company says 834 people in total are seeking compensation.

Alongside financial payments to victims, the company has made other efforts to take responsibility and signal the start of a new chapter.

Earlier this fall, the agency announced it would not claim management fees for advertisements and television appearances by the agency's performers for one year. All fees received would instead go to the performers themselves.

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Following the public scrutiny of Kitagawa's history of abuse, many television broadcasters and companies have distanced themselves from the talent powerhouse's performers.

Most prominently, national broadcaster NHK will not feature any acts from Starto Entertainment at this year's "Kohaku Uta Gassen." It's the first time in 44 years that entertainers from the agency will not appear on the annual New Year's Eve music show.

However, performers from the agency have begun appearing in more TV shows and ad campaigns in recent weeks. Several of Starto Entertainment's groups have also announced plans to hold livestreamed shows and concerts on YouTube on Dec. 31.

In changing its name to Starto Entertainment, the talent agency will scrub all references to its disgraced founder from its current structure.

Its old name was removed from the company's headquarters in Tokyo in early October, while the pop group formerly known as Johnny's West officially changed its name to West, among other changes.

According to the official statement from Starto Entertainment, the company will also focus on three new goals: "Greater digitization, including the establishment of a proprietary music streaming platform; increased global openness and overseas outreach; metaverse market entry: extending artists' talents with state-of-the-art

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