



Private Client Alert

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News Corp major shareholder: 'James Murdoch should succeed Rupert'

Alwaleed bin Talal, largest shareholder in conglomerate outside Murdoch clan, backs James to be next head. James Murdoch: Rupert's youngest son by his second wife. James Murdoch has been backed to succeed his father as head of News Corporation by Alwaleed bin Talal, the Saudi Arabian prince who is the largest shareholder in the media conglomerate outside the Murdoch clan.

Bin Talal, who owns a 7% stake in News Corp, described James as "Rupert Murdoch in the making", adding that he would back him to succeed his father, the chairman and chief executive of the company.

"If he [Rupert] doesn't appoint him, I'll be the first one to nominate him to be the successor of Mr Rupert Murdoch, God forbid if something happens to him," said bin Talal in an interview with Charlie Rose, the veteran presenter for US public service broadcaster PBS, on Wednesday.

"I have full confidence in him, full trust in him, and he's capable. He's really Rupert Murdoch in the making, and he's almost there now," he added.

Bin Talal's stake in News Corp is controlled by Kingdom Holdings, of which he is the chairman. He is not on News Corp's board of directors.

Rupert Murdoch, 78, has made no indication about when he expects to hand over the reins to the next generation of the Murdoch clan.

However, James, at 37 years the youngest of Murdoch's children by his second wife Anna, has been building his experience across News Corp's global operations and is now seen by many as a natural successor.

In late 2007 he was promoted from his role as chief executive of BSkyB to become chairman and chief executive of News Corp's Europe and Asia operations, overseeing businesses including the News International UK newspaper subsidiary and Sky Italia. James also replaced his father as non-executive chairman of BSkyB, in which News Corp is the largest shareholder.

Prior to becoming BSkyB chief executive in 2003, James was chief executive of Star TV, News Corp's Asian pay-TV business.

His brother, Lachlan, was viewed as a likely successor until he resigned as deputy chief operating officer of News Corp in 2005, to return to Australia to launch his own media investment business. Lachlan remains on the News Corp board.

James' other sibling, Elisabeth, has also opted to blaze her own trail outside of News Corp as the chairman and chief executive of Shine, one of the UK's biggest independent TV producer. Shine is the maker of shows such as MasterChef, Merlin and Ashes to Ashes.

Elisabeth is understood to have turned down an offer from her father to join the board early last year, around the time of the departure of News Corp's then president and chief operating officer Peter Chernin.

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