



# GOING FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL WITH TRADE FAIRS

Participating in international trade exhibitions has helped Singapore Safety Glass build brand recognition and secure a global partner

**M**arina Bay Sands, Singapore. City Tower Nishi-Umeda, Japan. Forbes Tower, Philippines. All of these landmark buildings have one thing in common: they feature customised glass solutions from Singapore Safety Glass (SSG).

Incorporated in 1989, SSG has had a hand in more than 1,250 projects in 23 countries. Mr Gan Geok Chua, SSG's Executive Director (above right,

with Mr Gary Lee, SSG's Business Development Manager), credits the company's solid business growth overseas to an ongoing commitment to participating in international trade shows and business mission trips.

In the late 1980s, few manufacturers possessed the skills or technology needed to produce high-quality tempered glass. "SSG saw this as a niche opportunity in the market," Mr Gan says. "As a result, we began

participating in international trade shows and exhibitions to build up our brand name in the global glass industry, and discover new technologies and business opportunities."

In May 2014, a business mission trip to explore new solar technologies in Germany – organised and supported by SPRING Singapore and International Enterprise (IE) Singapore – sparked a development that let the company take its business to the next level.

A chance meeting with OnlyGlass, a German glass solutions provider, led to SSG being able to bring in novel technologies not yet available in Southeast Asia. OnlyGlass is the creator of the innovative MediaFacade, a high-tech glass panel integrated with LED lights, which can be used as an advertising tool.

“What started out as an informal discussion with OnlyGlass during that trip led to a partnership agreement, and today, SSG is the sole distributor of MediaFacade in Southeast Asia,” says Mr Lee.

### Increased brand recognition

Years of building up its brand overseas by participating in trade fairs and business mission trips made securing a partnership with OnlyGlass a much easier task for the company.

“The glass industry may be small, but thanks to our participation in international trade fairs, SSG is known worldwide for its innovative glass solutions,” says Mr Lee.

“During that 2014 trip, everyone, from building designers and developers to equipment manufacturers, was interested in OnlyGlass’ MediaFacade decorative glass, but SSG stood out,” says Mr Lee.

“We’ve been showcasing our products at global trade events and business mission trips for years now, and it has definitely helped enhance our brand visibility and reputation. This gave us a leg-up over our competitors during that trip, and helped us win over OnlyGlass.”

### More business opportunities

Prior to its partnership with OnlyGlass, SSG’s business was largely focused on the manufacturing and export of glass products for the construction industry. “Now, we are also looking at securing business contracts with major advertising companies,” says Mr Lee.



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**Mr Gary Lee**  
Business Development Manager  
Singapore Safety Glass



“Large-scale high-tech glass panels are sought after in the advertising world. It’s these that give New York’s Times Square and London’s Piccadilly Circus the ‘oomph’ that makes them colourful and bright destinations,” says Mr Lee.

“But what makes OnlyGlass’ MediaFacade different from the rest is that it is able to transform an entire building façade into a giant LED screen. This means that any building owner could use this technology to generate advertising revenue.”

Now the company plans to export MediaFacade to markets such as Canada, the United States, Japan, Taiwan and Indonesia.

“We’re looking to increase our overseas exports, which currently stand at 40%,” explains Mr Gan. “We firmly believe this partnership will result in future growth for both SSG and OnlyGlass.”

### Future insights

SSG’s active participation in global trade exhibitions has also allowed the company to gain insights into future trends in the global glass industry. “Companies are now looking at more efficient and cost-effective methods to harvest ‘green’ energy. So far, one of the most effective ways is by using photovoltaic cells that absorb sunlight to generate electricity, which in turn can be used to power devices,” says Mr Gan.

To stay ahead of its competitors, SSG recently signed an agreement with Asahi Glass Company (AGC) of Japan – a global provider of glass, chemicals, electronics and ceramics technologies – to acquire the technological and marketing know-how for the purpose of installing and marketing glass-integrated photovoltaics (GIPV) in Singapore.

“These are panes of glass that contain built-in photovoltaic cells. They can be used to replace conventional building materials in parts of a building, such as roofs and skylights, as well as generate clean and green solar energy,” Mr Gan explains.

As Singapore moves towards becoming a Smart Nation, SSG believes that this technology will help to reduce the nation’s energy consumption. “We expect to see demand for GIPV increasing rapidly in the coming years, or even months, which will further contribute to our revenue,” says Mr Gan. “Thanks to our exposure to international markets, we’ve been able to keep up to date with global industry trends and prepare ourselves for the future.” ■

#### keytakeaways

- Trade fairs are an effective way to boost your company’s image and grow your business network.
- Participating in business mission trips organised by SPRING Singapore and IE Singapore can help SMEs gain insights into global market trends.