

Partitions with a Global View

Gaining market access through FTAs.

Founded in 2016, T1 Glass Systems is a specialist in acoustic glazed partition solutions, dedicated to creating functional, modern workspaces across Southeast Asia.

T1 Glass Systems benefitted from FTAs with SBF's guidance by securing Certificates of Origin under ASEAN Trade In Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and ASEAN China Free Trade Area (ACFTA). This enabled them to enjoy lower tariffs, streamline export processes, and expand into key Southeast Asian markets, boosting their competitiveness and accelerating regional growth.

Why did T1 Glass Systems look into international expansion?

From an economic perspective, markets outside of Singapore such as the ASEAN region provide boundless opportunities for a local firm like us. In Singapore, the economic value of partition products and solutions is around \$33 million. The number is 10 times more in the ASEAN region.

We wanted to test the market response for our products and solutions outside of Singapore. Geographically, it made sense for us to take our business into ASEAN.

Although our expansion plans were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we were not deterred. In 2023, as economies gradually opened up for businesses, we seized our chances. We now export our products to the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand.

What were some challenges T1 Glass Systems faced during the expansion?

We had planned to tackle all facets of expansion on our own. It was a massive undertaking, and as an SME, we have limited knowledge on resources and organisations that could help us with international expansion. We don't know how to do business overseas.

Applying for FTAs was extremely daunting because we are not trained in business law. For example, we wanted to apply for the ATIGA so that we would be able to receive tax incentives on our exports in the region. However, we were largely unfamiliar with the business jargon and paperwork involved which was overwhelming without proper guidance.

How did you overcome these challenges?

During these struggles, a personal contact of mine recommended that we reach out to the SBF for assistance. With SBF as consultants, we had in-person meetings where they guided us through the application process for FTAs.

We were able to fulfil all documentation to receive our Form D – a Certificate of Origin in the ATIGA – within half a year. Now, we would be able to request lower tariffs on our goods in the region. SBF was also instrumental in helping us understand and leverage the benefits of the ACFTA agreements to support our cross-border trade.

What plans does T1 Glass System have, and how will you continue to engage SBF?

We are keen on exploring opportunities with SBF's diverse network of partners and platforms as we work towards building a business presence in the international sphere.

Resources such as human talent and monetary funds remain integral for our business expansion. As such, I realised the strong need to work with SBF because it's about unity. And I believe that as a Singapore company, we should fly Singapore's flag together with fellow Singaporeans who are doing business in the ASEAN region. We are also exploring product diversification and plan to take our new products, when completed, to the Chinese market.

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Gerry Lee

Regional Director for T1 Glass Systems