

Dancer in a photovoltaic panel outfit at the anniversary celebration in Zhong Tian Stadium

Photos: Sven Tetzlaff

10 years of Trina

Trina Solar celebrated its tenth anniversary from April 21 to 23. The date was scheduled to coincide with the commissioning of the Trina Solar PV Industry Park.

All totalled, Trina Solar invited more than 1,000 customers, suppliers, experts, politicians and media representatives to the event. In addition to the invited guests, Trina's whole overseas team was present. This was a unique opportunity for guests to speak directly with their Trina contacts and briefly discuss any minor problems. This made the company's birthday party look a lot like a conference. Of course, the guests seized the opportunity to discuss their work with one another. Not surprisingly, one of the common themes there – as it is everywhere these days – was solar panel availability. Large European customers in particular said time and again how envious they were.

Exceptional Trina

At 10 years, Trina is indeed an »old« company. This is true in Europe and especially in China. We have to remember that the solar boom there has only been going on for five years. But this is not the only thing that makes Trina different from most of the other companies in that country – the author knows of no other company in this field in China that is so concerned with being international. In just about every company division, Chinese and foreign workers work together, both overseas and to no small extent in China as well. Trina also encourages team spirit. This might not be anything special in Europe, but China is another matter. The professional scene in China is still dominated by individualists. This is changing, but at Trina »esprit de corps« is no longer a distant goal; it is happening right now. There is a perceptible Trina identity, and more than a few foreigners at Trina speak Chinese.

Especially in times of heightened tensions and misunderstandings between the West and China, examples like this can help not only to solve problems and clear

up misunderstandings, but also to create a relaxed collegial atmosphere. Dispelling tensions is the very first step that has to occur before people can sit down and try to work out problems. In this spirit, Thomas Sauer of IBC delivered part of his speech in Chinese, much to the delight of all of the guests. His courage was rewarded with roaring applause.

Once upon a time

People who know Jifan Gao, Trina's CEO, are struck by his easy-going, open and friendly style. Still, Trina is today a company worth billions. Gao got his start in 1997 as a system installer and has not forgotten his roots. Originally, he had wanted to install systems in China – one could speculate that he still wants to do this. Within a few years, the company was transformed into a solar panel manufacturer. Nevertheless, Trina has a high market share of the systems installed in China (primarily stand-alone), like those that are part of the Brightness Programme. At the same time, Trina is one of the most important panel suppliers on the EU market.

The solar boom led to a shortage in raw materials and increased interdependencies. As a result, Trina has concentrated in recent years on manufacturing integration. Trina now manufactures ingots, wafers, cells and panels. That should be enough to satisfy anyone – but Trina has other plans.

The next step

Apart from the anniversary, the other cause for celebration was the grand opening of the Changzhou Trina Solar PV Industry Park (CTPIP). This sounds rather pedestrian, but it is anything but – this is nothing less than



Trina Solar founder, Jifan Gao, began in 1997 as a system installer; now he leads a company of several thousand employees.

the founding of another Solar Valley. Covering an area of some 4.5 km², it will play host to various PV industry suppliers and service providers. As a first step, Guangzhou Chien Song Grind Material Co. Ltd., Hubei Feilihua Quartz Glass Co. Ltd., Suzhou Good-Ark Electronics Co. Ltd., and a European PV glass manufacturer broke ground at the park during the grand opening celebration. The five companies will invest US\$ 275 million in the new location. As is typical for China, companies interested in getting established in the park will be offered numerous financial incentives, such as favourable real estate prices, as well as reduced corporate tax and VAT.

It has been conventional wisdom for some time that a unilateral focus on the EU market entails some risks. That is why the Chinese PV industry is looking to diversify its markets. The current focus is on the USA, Canada, and Australia. But even more important is the Chinese market itself. The lack of such a market is due to the high cost of photovoltaics. Solar Valleys just may bring costs down. If they succeed, companies like Trina are headed into a golden age.

A time for work and a time for play

Following a morning conference and the CTPIP opening in the afternoon, Trina was ready to celebrate. 1,000 guests and some 5,000 employees were driven to the Zhong Tian Stadium to attend the 10th Anniversary Culture Show, a review of dance, opera, rock, acrobatics, but not short on speeches and awards either. At the finale, Gao was visibly relieved and satisfied with the successful day. We can only hope that the 15th anniversary celebration enjoys such a cheerful and playful mood as well. *

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