



# Prestige Glass International

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<b>Headquarters</b>	5 Roddis Road, Elliot Lake, Ontario, P5A 2T1
<b>Year Established</b>	1995
<b>NAICS</b>	327214 - Glass manufacturing
<b>Employees</b>	33
<b>Major Expansions</b>	2012
<b>Exports</b>	US
<b>Parent Company</b>	St Regis Group
<b>Other Locations</b>	Manufacturing - Chicago

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Prestige Glass was established in 1995, and originally supplied both promotional products and glass awards. The company operated out of a small facility with only six employees until the late 1990s, when there was a marked increase in the popularity of glass awards as gifts of recognition. Afterwards, Prestige Glass continued to experience steady growth, eventually being acquired by the St Regis Group in 2012. This acquisition resulted in the Group's corporate headquarters being relocated to Markham, and a sister manufacturing company being established in Chicago. Prestige Glass's history of success in Elliot Lake allowed the company to remain there and become the Canadian manufacturing arm of the St Regis Group.

In order to stay current with the newest styles and trends in its customer-driven industry, Prestige Glass develops strong relationships with customers, and welcomes open communication. Receiving feedback directly from the end customer enables the firm to stay at the forefront of the awards industry with its product designs. The company also recently capitalized on the expertise that it has accumulated working with glass by manufacturing customized glass pulpits that are sold to churches in the United States.



Although glass pulpit sales comprise only about 15 percent of revenue, this development represents one way that Prestige Glass has successfully utilized its existing resources to expand into a niche industry.

Due to the nature of the awards industry, all products manufactured by Prestige Glass are sold to the final customer through a distributor. Nevertheless, the company is dedicated to developing relationships with its end customers, and customers appreciate that they are able to deal directly with the designer and manufacturer of the product, rather than just a seller. However, the greatest value that Prestige Glass provides to its customers is the ability to completely customize awards. The majority of the company's competitors can make personal modifications to stock catalogue items that are offered, but Prestige Glass is one of only a few companies in the industry that can design and manufacture a unique award from scratch. This competitive advantage has allowed the firm to provide custom awards for large Canadian events, such as the Canadian Country Music Awards and the Canadian Football League Grey Cup. Additionally, the superior quality of Prestige Glass's unique awards has not gone unnoticed. The Promotional Products Association International has awarded Prestige Glass the "Customized Non-Catalog Product \$25 & Up Gold Award" on five separate occasions.

The original founder of Prestige Glass chose to establish the company in Elliot Lake because it was a very cost-effective location, and provided a unique talent pool from which he could hire. When the local mines closed, there were many skilled individuals left looking for work. Although most of these employees had to be retrained to work with glass, hiring hardworking individuals helped the company grow quickly and consistently in the late 1990s. Further, Elliot Lake is a very small community, so there are only a limited number of jobs available at any given time; this means that most employees remain with one employer for the duration of their working life. At Prestige Glass, for example, the majority of the company's workforce has been there for 8–10 years, while the operations manager, Dan, and customer service manager, Anne, have worked there for 25 and 26 years, respectively. This extremely low turnover rate gives Prestige Glass the confidence to invest time and money into training new employees who need help transitioning into the glass awards industry.

Proximity to U.S. customers became another advantage of the company's location as Prestige Glass expanded and began exporting. The firm has the option to drive its products across the border and ship to customers from inside the United States, removing the cost of duties. Exports fluctuate with the currency, but in 2017, about 50 percent of Prestige Glass's sales were in Canada, while the remaining 50 percent were exported to the United States.

The company's largest competitive advantage—the ability to customize and/or create entirely unique awards—can be directly attributed to its employees. There are four main departments within Prestige Glass, and all of them are necessary for customization: manufacturing, graphic design, decorating, and administrative. Among these departments, finding employees for manufacturing is the most difficult because these workers require experience and mechanical knowledge that will allow them to perform maintenance on the equipment when required. Having in-house maintenance capabilities saves Prestige Glass both time and money since the company does not have to outsource troubleshooting and maintenance services to nearby large centres.

At the same time, the graphic design team is equally important because these staff members are responsible for responding to customer requests and creating unique products, as well as designing stock items that fit with the newest industry trends. Design employees require a fine arts or design background, and the ability to use Adobe Photoshop or other graphic programs.



Employees on the decorating team are responsible for a very labour-intensive stage of the production process, including final assembly of the product. They must be meticulous, ensuring the final product will meet customer standards in every detail. Finally, the administrative department is responsible for all purchasing and customer service functions. Customer service representatives have excellent communication skills and a genuine concern for the satisfaction of their customers. This exceptional customer service is one of the main reasons why Prestige Glass has been able to stay competitive and innovative in a customer-driven industry.

The small size of Elliot Lake enables Prestige Glass to remain involved with the community by frequently participating in local fundraisers, charities, and events. The company has also developed a strong relationship with the municipal government, and capitalized on various funding initiatives and available grants. Grants that subsidize the cost of training new employees have been extremely beneficial to Prestige Glass over the years. Additionally, the company's general manager, Steve Antunes, is a member of the Elliot Lake Economic Development Advisory Committee, which allows him to keep up with local economic development initiatives, and to help Elliot Lake become a more enticing location for investors.

At present, Prestige Glass's most significant challenge comes from offshore competitors that can manufacture a similar product for a fraction of the cost. Competing with these firms on price alone is impossible, but by focusing on its outstanding customer service and customization capabilities, Prestige Glass successfully attracts a wide range of customers.

Another challenge is the pressure being put on businesses in Ontario by provincial legislation. Increasing the minimum wage and the amount of sick days for employees raises the cost of running a business for employers, making it even harder to compete globally. However, Prestige Glass plans to keep building its key capabilities so it can continue to leverage its competitive advantages and remain a successful exporter to the United States.

Looking forward, Prestige Glass will continue to utilize customer feedback to remain a leader in the glass awards industry. Moreover, the company plans to increase its workforce by raising awareness of Elliot Lake as a wonderful community, so that more hardworking and talented individuals choose to live there. Prestige Glass will also look to attract new customers by highlighting the multitude of awards it has won for its custom designs, ensuring that its products are popular among customers and cherished by recipients for many years to come.