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U.S. Department of Justice

Immigration and Naturalization Service

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OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS
425 Eye Street N.W.
ULLB, 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20536



File: WAC-01-105-53382 Office: California Service Center

Date:

FEB 10 2003

IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary



Petition: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

PUBLIC COPY

IN BEHALF OF PETITIONER: SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or the analysis used in reaching the decision was inconsistent with the information provided or with precedent decisions, you may file a motion to reconsider. Such a motion must state the reasons for reconsideration and be supported by any pertinent precedent decisions. Any motion to reconsider must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider, as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.5(a)(1)(i).

If you have new or additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reopen. Such a motion must state the new facts to be proved at the reopened proceeding and be supported by affidavits or other documentary evidence. Any motion to reopen must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reopen, except that failure to file before this period expires may be excused in the discretion of the Service where it is demonstrated that the delay was reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant or petitioner. Id.

Any motion must be filed with the office that originally decided your case along with a fee of \$110 as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.7.

FOR THE ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER,
EXAMINATIONS

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The nonimmigrant visa petition was denied by the director and is now before the Associate Commissioner for Examinations on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is an information technology consulting business with 15 employees and a gross annual income of \$2.6 million. It seeks to employ the beneficiary as a consultant-programmer/analyst for a period of two years. The director determined the petitioner, as the beneficiary's agent, had not provided employment contracts including a complete itinerary of services to be performed by the beneficiary. The director also determined that, without such contracts, the Service was unable to determine whether the petitioner had complied with the terms of the labor condition application.

On appeal, the petitioner submits a brief.

Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b), provides in part for nonimmigrant classification to qualified aliens who are coming temporarily to the United States to perform services in a specialty occupation. Section 214(i)(1) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. 1184(i)(1), defines a "specialty occupation" as an occupation that requires theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(B), the petitioner shall submit the following with an H-1B petition involving a specialty occupation:

1. A certification from the Secretary of Labor that the petitioner has filed a labor condition application with the Secretary,
2. A statement that it will comply with the terms of the labor condition application for the duration of the alien's authorized period of stay,
3. Evidence that the alien qualifies to perform services in the specialty occupation . . .

The petitioner has provided a certified labor condition application and a statement that it will comply with the terms of the labor condition application.

8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(2)(i)(F), *Agents as petitioners*, states:

A United States agent may file a petition in cases involving workers who are traditionally self-employed or workers who use agents to arrange short-term employment on their behalf with numerous employers, and in cases where a foreign employer authorizes the agent to act on its behalf. A United States agent may be: the actual employer of the beneficiary, the representative of both the employer and the beneficiary, or, a person or entity authorized by the employer to act for, in place of, the employer as its agent. A petition filed by a United States agent is subject to the following conditions;

(1) An agent performing the function of an employer must guarantee the wages and other terms and conditions of employment by contractual agreement with the beneficiary or beneficiaries of the petition. The agent/employer must also provide an itinerary of definite employment and information on any other services planned for the period of time requested.

(2) A person or company in business as an agent may file the H petition involving multiple employers as the representative of both the employers and the beneficiary or beneficiaries if the supporting documentation includes a complete itinerary of services or engagements. The itinerary shall specify the dates of each service or engagement, the names and addresses of the actual employers, and the names and addresses of the establishment, venues, or locations where the services will be performed. In questionable cases, a contract between the employers and the beneficiary or beneficiaries may be required. The burden is on the agent to explain the terms and conditions of the employment and to provide any required documentation.

(3) A foreign employer, who, through a United States agent, files a petition for an H nonimmigrant alien is responsible for complying with all of the employer sanctions provisions of section 274A of the Act and 8 C.F.R. part 274a.

8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(4)(ii) states, in part, that:

United States employer means a person, firm, corporation, contractor, or other association, or organization in the United States which:

(1) Engages a person to work within the United States;

(2) Has an employer-employee relationship with respect to employees under this part, as indicated by the fact that

it may hire, pay, fire, supervise, or otherwise control the work of any such employee; and

(3) Has an Internal Revenue Service Tax identification number.

8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(2)(i)(B) states, in part, as follows:

A petition which requires services to be performed or training to be received in more than one location must include an itinerary with the dates and locations of the services or training . . .

8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(4)(iv)(B) states, in part, that an H-1B petition involving a specialty occupation shall be accompanied by:

Copies of any written contracts between the petitioner and beneficiary, or a summary of the terms of the oral agreement under which the beneficiary will be employed, if there is no written contract.

8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(9)(i) states in part that the director shall consider all the evidence submitted *and such other evidence as he or she may independently require to assist his or her adjudication.* (Emphasis added.)

Further, in a Service memorandum entitled "Supporting Documentation for H-1B Petitions," dated November 13, 1995, it states as follows:

Requests for contracts should be made only in those cases where the officer can articulate a specific need for such documentation."

On appeal, the petitioner states, in part, as follows:

...we hereby submit...a signed Agreement for Software Development Services by and between [the petitioner] and our client Syncata. This contract is for Service Deliverables valid from September 1, 2001 to August 31, 2003.

Our contracts are generally to develop and implement a system or subsystem or to perform turnkey projects. The contracts are not necessarily for the services of a particular, designated consultant. As a result, there is generally no agreement to supply a particular individual for a particular job. Typically, the client does not know which professional will be assigned to a particular job site. The staffing of these projects is within the discretion of our company.

...Please note that our company is a computer-consulting firm and is not an "employment agency". While our employees perform most of their programming and software development duties at client sites, our company is the actual employer. We retain complete control over all employees...

The record contains, in part, the following:

- * Agreement signed on September 20, 2001, for software development services between the petitioner and Syncata;
- * Employment relationship agreement dated January 8, 2001, between the petitioner and the beneficiary.

In a letter dated February 7, 2001, the petitioner's director stated, in part, as follows:

The job offered to [the beneficiary], as a Consultant (Programmer/Analyst) requires the services of a person performing a "specialty occupation" as laid out in job specifications from our clients...

In a Request for Evidence dated August 16, 2001, the director requested, in part, the following:

- * Indicate where the beneficiary will perform the computer consulting services.
- * The evidence provided shows that the petitioner's business is to outsource computer consultants to clients outside the petitioner's work site. If any of the computer consulting services will be performed at the petitioner's address[,] provide evidence to show that the petitioner, as part of its business, requires personnel with the same computer skills as those provided for outsource computer consulting services to complete projects at its address.
- * Finally, include a complete itinerary of services or engagements where the beneficiary will perform those services. The itinerary should specify the dates of each service or engagement, the names and addresses of the actual employers, and the names and addresses of the establishment, venue, or locations where the service will be performed by the beneficiary. The itinerary should include all service planned for the period of time requested--in this case until February 12, 2003.

The record contains a summary of the terms of employment indicating that the petitioner has hired the beneficiary and will pay the

beneficiary's salary. Even though the petitioner argues that such documentation demonstrates that the petitioner and beneficiary share an employer-employee relationship, as with employment agencies as petitioners, the Service must examine the ultimate employment of the alien, and determine whether the position qualifies as a specialty occupation. Cf. Defensor v. Meissner, 201 F.3d 384 (5th Cir. 2000). The critical element is not whether the petitioner is an employer or an agent, but whether the position actually requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and the attainment of a bachelor's degree in the specific specialty as the minimum for entry into the occupation as required by the Act.¹ To interpret the regulations any other way would lead to absurd results: if the Service was limited to reviewing a petitioner's self-imposed employment requirements, then any alien with a bachelor's degree could be brought into the United States to perform a menial, non-professional, or an otherwise non-specialty occupation, so long as the employer required all such employees to have bachelor's degrees. See id. at 388.

In this case, although the record contains an agreement signed on September 20, 2001, for software development services between the petitioner and Syncata, nowhere in the record is there any indication as to where the beneficiary will perform the duties of the proffered position. As such, there is no comprehensive description of the beneficiary's proposed duties from an authorized representative of the petitioner's client where the beneficiary will ultimately perform the proposed duties. Without such description, the petitioner has not demonstrated that the proffered position meets the statutory definition of specialty occupation. For this reason, the petition may not be approved.

The record demonstrates that in order to demonstrate that a specialty occupation position exists for the beneficiary, the director properly requested the above listed contracts. Absent such supporting documentation, the petitioner has not persuasively demonstrated that a specialty occupation exists for the beneficiary, or that it has complied with the terms of the labor condition application. For this reason the petition may not be approved.

¹ The court in Defensor v. Meissner observed that the four criteria at 8 C.F.R. 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) present certain ambiguities when compared to the statutory definition, and "might also be read as merely an additional requirement that a position must meet, in addition to the statutory and regulatory definition." Supra at 387.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. 1361. The petitioner has not sustained that burden. Accordingly, the decision of the director will not be disturbed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.