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U.S. Citizenship
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Services

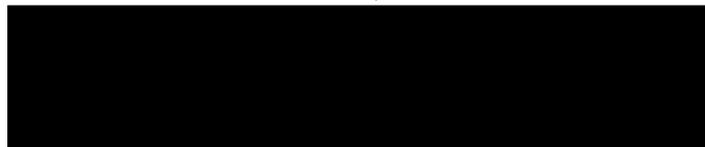
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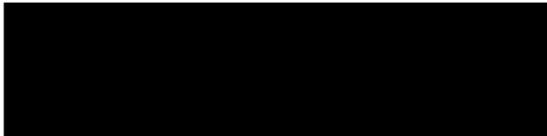
File: WAC 04 087 53410 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date: DEC 04 2007

IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary:



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

IN BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office 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.


Robert P. Wiemann, Chief
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Director, California Service Center, denied the petition for a nonimmigrant visa. The matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The AAO will dismiss the appeal.

The petitioner filed this nonimmigrant visa petition seeking to extend the employment of its associate manager as an L-1A nonimmigrant intracompany transferee pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(L) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(L). The petitioner is a corporation organized under the laws of the State of California and is allegedly engaged in international trade.¹ The beneficiary was initially granted a one-year period of stay to open or be employed at a new office in the United States, and the petitioner now seeks to extend the beneficiary's stay.

The director denied the petition concluding that the petitioner did not establish that the beneficiary will be employed in the United States in a primarily managerial or executive capacity.

The petitioner subsequently filed an appeal. The director declined to treat the appeal as a motion and forwarded the appeal to the AAO for review. On appeal, counsel to the petitioner asserts that the director erred and that the beneficiary's duties are primarily those of a manager. In support, counsel submits a brief.

To establish eligibility for the L-1 nonimmigrant visa classification, the petitioner must meet the criteria outlined in section 101(a)(15)(L) of the Act. Specifically, a qualifying organization must have employed the beneficiary in a qualifying managerial or executive capacity, or in a specialized knowledge capacity, for one continuous year within three years preceding the beneficiary's application for admission into the United States. In addition, the beneficiary must seek to enter the United States temporarily to continue rendering his or her services to the same employer or a subsidiary or affiliate thereof in a managerial, executive, or specialized knowledge capacity.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3) states that an individual petition filed on Form I-129 shall be accompanied by:

- (i) Evidence that the petitioner and the organization which employed or will employ the alien are qualifying organizations as defined in paragraph (l)(1)(ii)(G) of this section.
- (ii) Evidence that the alien will be employed in an executive, managerial, or specialized knowledge capacity, including a detailed description of the services to be performed.
- (iii) Evidence that the alien has at least one continuous year of full-time employment abroad with a qualifying organization within the three years preceding the filing of the petition.

¹It should be noted that, according to California state corporate records, the petitioner's corporate status in California has been "dissolved." Therefore, as the petitioner has voluntarily elected to wind-up its operations and has completely dissolved its business as a corporation, the company no longer exists and can no longer be considered a legal entity in the United States. Therefore, if the appeal were not being dismissed for the reasons further explained herein, this would call into question the petitioner's continued eligibility for the benefit sought.

- (iv) Evidence that the alien's prior year of employment abroad was in a position that was managerial, executive or involved specialized knowledge and that the alien's prior education, training, and employment qualifies him/her to perform the intended services in the United States; however, the work in the United States need not be the same work which the alien performed abroad.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(14)(ii) also provides that a visa petition, which involved the opening of a new office, may be extended by filing a new Form I-129, accompanied by the following:

- (A) Evidence that the United States and foreign entities are still qualifying organizations as defined in paragraph (l)(1)(ii)(G) of this section;
- (B) Evidence that the United States entity has been doing business as defined in paragraph (l)(1)(ii)(H) of this section for the previous year;
- (C) A statement of the duties performed by the beneficiary for the previous year and the duties the beneficiary will perform under the extended petition;
- (D) A statement describing the staffing of the new operation, including the number of employees and types of positions held accompanied by evidence of wages paid to employees when the beneficiary will be employed in a managerial or executive capacity; and
- (E) Evidence of the financial status of the United States operation.

The primary issue in the present matter is whether the beneficiary will be employed by the United States entity in a primarily managerial or executive capacity.

Section 101(a)(44)(A) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(44)(A), defines the term "managerial capacity" as an assignment within an organization in which the employee primarily:

- (i) manages the organization, or a department, subdivision, function, or component of the organization;
- (ii) supervises and controls the work of other supervisory, professional, or managerial employees, or manages an essential function within the organization, or a department or subdivision of the organization;
- (iii) if another employee or other employees are directly supervised, has the authority to hire and fire or recommend those as well as other personnel actions (such as promotion and leave authorization), or if no other employee is directly supervised, functions at a senior level within the organizational hierarchy or with respect to the function managed; and

- (iv) exercises discretion over the day-to-day operations of the activity or function for which the employee has authority. A first-line supervisor is not considered to be acting in a managerial capacity merely by virtue of the supervisor's supervisory duties unless the employees supervised are professional.

Section 101(a)(44)(B) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(44)(B), defines the term "executive capacity" as an assignment within an organization in which the employee primarily:

- (i) directs the management of the organization or a major component or function of the organization;
- (ii) establishes the goals and policies of the organization, component, or function;
- (iii) exercises wide latitude in discretionary decision-making; and
- (iv) receives only general supervision or direction from higher level executives, the board of directors, or stockholders of the organization.

The petitioner does not clarify in the initial petition whether the beneficiary will perform primarily managerial duties under section 101(a)(44)(A) of the Act, or primarily executive duties under section 101(a)(44)(B) of the Act, and counsel on appeal appears to limit the beneficiary to the managerial classification. A petitioner may not claim that a beneficiary will be employed as a hybrid "executive/manager" and rely on partial sections of the two statutory definitions. Given the lack of clarity, the AAO will assume that the petitioner is asserting that the beneficiary will be employed in either a managerial *or* an executive capacity and will consider both classifications.

The petitioner described the beneficiary's proposed job duties in an attachment to the Form I-129 as follows: "Manage overall operations of the company; strategize with Associate Manager as to goal, direction and policies of the company's growth; hire and fire managerial personnel, in conjunction with the Associate Manager[r]; report to the Board of Directors of the parent company." It should be noted that the petitioner attributed this job description to the "manager," and it is unclear whether this brief description is truly applicable to the beneficiary who is described in both the Form I-129 and organizational chart as the "associate manager."

The petitioner also submitted an organizational chart in which the beneficiary is described as the "associate manager" and is portrayed as reporting to a manager. The beneficiary is also shown to directly supervise a "sales manager" and an "office manager," who, in turn, is shown to supervise a receptionist/bookkeeper.

On March 22, 2004, the director requested additional evidence. The director requested, *inter alia*, more detailed descriptions of the job duties of the beneficiary and his subordinate employees.

In response, counsel to the petitioner submitted a letter dated April 28, 2004 in which he describes the beneficiary's proposed duties as follows:

- Managing overall operations, negotiating and signing contracts on behalf of the company (40%)
- Directing administration and sales (40%)
- Hiring and firing managerial personnel (15%)
- Prepare performance and development reports to Manager (5%)

The petitioner also described the beneficiary's two direct subordinates. The petitioner described the "sales manager" as "manag[ing] the sales operations of the U.S. company and ha[ving] the authority to hire, train and fire sales personnel." The petitioner described the "office manager" as having a community college degree and as "manag[ing] the administration of the U.S. company and ha[ving] the authority to hire, train, and fire office workers."

On August 25, 2004, the director denied the petition. The director concluded that the petitioner failed to establish that the beneficiary will be employed primarily in a managerial or executive capacity.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that the beneficiary's duties are primarily those of a manager.

Upon review, the petitioner's assertions are not persuasive.

Title 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(v)(C) allows the "new office" operation one year within the date of approval of the petition to support an executive or managerial position. There is no provision in Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) regulations that allows for an extension of this one-year period. If the business does not have sufficient staffing after one year to relieve the beneficiary from primarily performing operational and administrative tasks, the petitioner is ineligible by regulation for an extension. In the instant matter, the United States operation has not reached the point that it can employ the beneficiary in a predominantly managerial or executive position.

When examining the executive or managerial capacity of the beneficiary, the AAO will look first to the petitioner's description of the job duties. See 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(ii). The petitioner's description of the job duties must clearly describe the duties to be performed by the beneficiary and indicate whether such duties are either in an executive or managerial capacity. *Id.* As explained above, a petitioner cannot claim that some of the duties of the position entail executive responsibilities, while other duties are managerial. A petitioner may not claim that a beneficiary will be employed as a hybrid "executive/manager" and rely on partial sections of the two statutory definitions.

The petitioner's description of the beneficiary's job duties has failed to establish that the beneficiary will act in a "managerial" capacity. In support of its petition, the petitioner has provided a vague and nonspecific description of the beneficiary's duties that fails to demonstrate what the beneficiary will do on a day-to-day basis. For example, the petitioner states that the beneficiary will devote 80% of his time to "[m]anaging overall operations, negotiating and signing contracts on behalf of the company" and "[d]irecting administration and sales." However, the petitioner does not explain what, exactly, the beneficiary will do to "manage" or "direct" the company, administration, or sales. The fact that the petitioner has given the beneficiary a managerial title and has prepared a vague job description which includes inflated duties does not establish that the beneficiary will actually perform managerial duties. Broad, conclusory statements such as

those found in the instant job description are not probative of the beneficiary performing managerial or executive duties. Specifics are clearly an important indication of whether a beneficiary's duties are primarily executive or managerial in nature; otherwise meeting the definitions would simply be a matter of reiterating the regulations. *Fedin Bros. Co., Ltd. v. Sava*, 724 F. Supp. 1103 (E.D.N.Y. 1989), *aff'd*, 905 F.2d 41 (2d Cir. 1990). Going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972).

Likewise, it appears that many of the duties listed by the petitioner are likely non-qualifying administrative or operational tasks which do not rise to the level of being managerial or executive in nature. For example, the petitioner states that the beneficiary will prepare "performance and development reports" and direct sales. However, preparing reports and engaging in sales activities constitute administrative or operational tasks when the tasks inherent to these duties are performed by the beneficiary. When coupled with the vagueness of the other ascribed duties, e.g., managing operations and directing administration, it cannot be confirmed that he will be "primarily" employed as a manager. An employee who "primarily" performs the tasks necessary to produce a product or to provide services is not considered to be "primarily" employed in a managerial or executive capacity. See sections 101(a)(44)(A) and (B) of the Act (requiring that one "primarily" perform the enumerated managerial or executive duties); see also *Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. 593, 604 (Comm. 1988). It is more likely than not that both the beneficiary and his staff will all primarily perform non-qualifying tasks. See generally *Family, Inc. v. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*, 469 F.3d 1313 (9th Cir. 2006).

The petitioner has also failed to establish that the beneficiary will supervise and control the work of other supervisory, managerial, or professional employees, or will manage an essential function of the organization. As explained in the organizational chart and job descriptions for the subordinate staff members, the beneficiary appears to directly supervise a sales manager and an office manager, and, indirectly, a receptionist/bookkeeper. However, the vague job description provided for the office manager fails to establish that she will primarily engage in performing supervisory or managerial duties. An employee will not be considered to be a supervisor simply because of a job title or because he or she supervises daily work activities and assignments. Rather, the employee must be shown to possess some significant degree of control or authority over the employment of subordinates. See generally *Browne v. Signal Mountain Nursery, L.P.*, 286 F.Supp.2d 904, 907 (E.D. Tenn. 2003) (cited in *Hayes v. Laroy Thomas, Inc.*, 2007 WL 128287 at *16 (E.D. Tex. Jan. 11, 2007)). To the contrary, it appears that the office manager will perform the tasks necessary to produce a product or to provide a service, e.g., clerical tasks. Furthermore, the fact that the organizational chart indicates that the petitioner intends on hiring a sales staff in the future is not relevant. The petitioner must establish eligibility at the time of filing the nonimmigrant visa petition. A visa petition may not be approved at a future date after the petitioner or beneficiary becomes eligible under a new set of facts. *Matter of Michelin Tire Corp.*, 17 I&N Dec. 248 (Reg. Comm. 1978).

In view of the above, it appears that the beneficiary will be primarily a first-line supervisor of non-professional employees, the provider of actual services, or a combination of both. A managerial employee must have authority over day-to-day operations beyond the level normally vested in a first-line supervisor, unless the supervised employees are professionals. Section 101(a)(44)(A)(iv) of the Act; see also *Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. at 604. Moreover, the petitioner has not established that the

beneficiary will manage professional employees.² Therefore, the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary will be employed primarily in a managerial capacity.³

Similarly, the petitioner has failed to establish that the beneficiary will act in an "executive" capacity. The statutory definition of the term "executive capacity" focuses on a person's elevated position within a complex organizational hierarchy, including major components or functions of the organization, and that person's authority to direct the organization. Section 101(a)(44)(B) of the Act. Under the statute, a beneficiary must have the ability to "direct the management" and "establish the goals and policies" of that organization. Inherent to the definition, the organization must have a subordinate level of employees for the beneficiary to direct, and the beneficiary must primarily focus on the broad goals and policies of the organization rather than the day-to-day operations of the enterprise. An individual will not be deemed an executive under the statute simply because they have an executive title or because they "direct" the enterprise as the owner or sole managerial employee. The beneficiary must also exercise "wide latitude in discretionary decision making"

²In evaluating whether the beneficiary will manage professional employees, the AAO must evaluate whether the subordinate positions require a baccalaureate degree as a minimum for entry into the field of endeavor. Section 101(a)(32) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(32), states that "[t]he term *profession* shall include but not be limited to architects, engineers, lawyers, physicians, surgeons, and teachers in elementary or secondary schools, colleges, academies, or seminaries." The term "profession" contemplates knowledge or learning, not merely skill, of an advanced type in a given field gained by a prolonged course of specialized instruction and study of at least baccalaureate level, which is a realistic prerequisite to entry into the particular field of endeavor. *Matter of Sea*, 19 I&N Dec. 817 (Comm. 1988); *Matter of Ling*, 13 I&N Dec. 35 (R.C. 1968); *Matter of Shin*, 11 I&N Dec. 686 (D.D. 1966).

³While the petitioner has not argued that the beneficiary will manage an essential function of the organization, the record nevertheless would not support this position even if taken. The term "function manager" applies generally when a beneficiary does not supervise or control the work of a subordinate staff but instead is primarily responsible for managing an "essential function" within the organization. See section 101(a)(44)(A)(ii) of the Act. The term "essential function" is not defined by statute or regulation. If a petitioner claims that the beneficiary is managing an essential function, the petitioner must furnish a written job offer that clearly describes the duties to be performed in managing the essential function, i.e., identify the function with specificity, articulate the essential nature of the function, and establish the proportion of the beneficiary's daily duties attributed to managing the essential function. See 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(ii). In addition, the petitioner's description of the beneficiary's daily duties must demonstrate that the beneficiary manages the function rather than performs the duties related to the function. In this matter, the petitioner has not provided evidence that the beneficiary will manage an essential function. The petitioner's vague job description fails to document what proportion of the beneficiary's duties will be managerial, if any, and what proportion will be non-managerial. Also, as explained above, the record establishes that the beneficiary will primarily be a first-line supervisor of non-professional employees and/or will be engaged in performing non-qualifying operational or administrative tasks. Absent a clear and credible breakdown of the time spent by the beneficiary performing his duties, the AAO cannot determine what proportion of his duties will be managerial, nor can it deduce whether the beneficiary will primarily perform the duties of a function manager. See *IKEA US, Inc. v. U.S. Dept. of Justice*, 48 F. Supp. 2d 22, 24 (D.D.C. 1999).

and receive only "general supervision or direction from higher level executives, the board of directors, or stockholders of the organization." *Id.* For the same reasons indicated above, the petitioner has failed to establish that the beneficiary will act primarily in an executive capacity. The job description provided for the beneficiary is so vague that the AAO cannot deduce what the beneficiary will do on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, as explained above, it appears that the beneficiary will be primarily employed as a first-line supervisor and will perform the tasks necessary to produce a product or to provide a service. Therefore, the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary will be employed primarily in an executive capacity.

It is appropriate for CIS to consider the size of the petitioning company in conjunction with other relevant factors, such as a company's small personnel size, the absence of employees who would perform the non-managerial or non-executive operations of the company, or a "shell company" that does not conduct business in a regular and continuous manner. *See, e.g., Systronics Corp. v. INS*, 153 F. Supp. 2d 7, 15 (D.D.C. 2001).

Accordingly, in this matter, the petitioner has failed to establish that the beneficiary will be primarily performing managerial or executive duties, and the petition may not be approved for that reason.

Beyond the decision of the director, the petitioner has not established that it still has a qualifying relationship with the foreign entity, because the petitioner has failed to establish that it or the foreign entity is "doing business" as defined by the regulations.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(14)(ii)(A) states that a petition to extend a "new office" petition filed on Form I-129 shall be accompanied by:

Evidence that the United States and the foreign entity are still qualifying organizations as defined in paragraph (l)(1)(ii)(G) of this section[.]

Title 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(i)(1)(ii)(G) defines a "qualifying organization" as a firm, corporation, or other legal entity which "meets exactly one of the qualifying relationships specified in the definitions of a parent, branch, affiliate or subsidiary specified in paragraph (l)(1)(ii) of this section" and "is or will be doing business." A "subsidiary" is defined in pertinent part as a corporation "of which a parent owns, directly or indirectly, more than half of the entity and controls the entity." "Doing business" is defined in pertinent part as "the regular, systematic, and continuous provision of goods and/or services."

In this matter, the petitioner has failed to establish that it is currently "doing business." While the petitioner submitted tax returns and business documents indicating that the petitioner has purchased imported goods, the record is devoid of evidence of any sales by the petitioner. Although the tax returns and the income statement claim that the petitioner has sold goods, these documents are not supported by any corroborating evidence, e.g., invoices, customer data, or bills of sale. Once again, going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190. Failure to submit requested evidence that precludes a material line of inquiry shall be grounds for denying the petition. 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(14). Furthermore, the income statement submitted by the petitioner is of questionable evidentiary value. The accountant who prepared the statement indicated in a letter dated January 27, 2004 that she cannot offer any assurances as to the accuracy of the income statement and that the statement is based entirely upon the petitioner's representations. Finally, the

lease submitted as evidence of the petitioner's purported business premises lists the beneficiary as the lessee, not the petitioner, and thus calls into question whether the petitioner has ever conducted business in the United States. Accordingly, the petitioner has failed to establish that it is engaged in the regular, systematic, and continuous provision of goods and/or services.⁴

Moreover, the petitioner has failed to establish that the foreign entity has been "doing business." The record is entirely devoid of any evidence of business activity by the foreign entity. Although the petitioner has submitted an untranslated advertising brochure, payroll records, photographs of a building presumably in China, a telephone listing, a business license, and unaudited financial data, this evidence does not establish the regular, systematic, and continuous provision of goods and/or services. The petitioner did not submit any invoices, customer data, or bills of sale other than what concerns the petitioner and its claimed purchase of goods from abroad.

Accordingly, as the petitioner has failed to establish that it or the foreign entity is "doing business," the petitioner has failed to establish that it and the foreign entity are qualifying organizations, and the petition may not be approved for this additional reason.

Beyond the decision of the director, the petitioner has failed to establish that the beneficiary was employed abroad in a primarily executive or managerial capacity. In support of its petition, the petitioner has provided a vague and nonspecific description of the beneficiary's duties that fails to demonstrate what the beneficiary did on a day-to-day basis. For example, counsel asserts in a letter dated April 28, 2004 that the beneficiary devoted 40% of his time to "[n]egotiating and signing contracts" and 30% of his time to "[d]irecting administration and sales." However, the petitioner failed to specifically explain what, exactly, the beneficiary did in performing these duties. Furthermore, the preparation of reports and negotiating contracts are administrative or operational tasks when the tasks inherent to these duties are performed by the beneficiary. Overall, the vague job description for the beneficiary fails to establish that the beneficiary was engaged in primarily performing executive or managerial duties abroad, and the petition may not be approved for this additional reason.

Despite any number of previously approved petitions, CIS does not have any authority to confer an immigration benefit when the petitioner fails to meet its burden of proof in a subsequent petition. *See* section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The prior approvals do not preclude CIS from denying an extension of the original visa based on a reassessment of the petitioner's qualifications. *Texas A&M Univ. v. Upchurch*, 99 Fed. Appx. 556, 2004 WL 1240482 (5th Cir. 2004). Therefore, even though the petitioner was successful in the past in petitioning for the beneficiary, the director properly denied the petition in this case.

Furthermore, if the previous nonimmigrant petition was approved based on the same assertions that are contained in the current record, the approval would constitute material and gross error on the part of the director. The AAO is not required to approve an application or petition where eligibility has not been demonstrated merely because of prior approvals that may have been erroneous. *See, e.g., Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. 593, 597 (Comm. 1988). It would be absurd to suggest that CIS or

⁴It is noted that, as the instant petition seeks to extend a "new office" petition, the petitioner has also failed to establish that it has been doing business for the previous year for the same reason. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(14)(ii). For this additional reason, the petition may not be approved.

any agency must treat acknowledged errors as binding precedent. *Sussex Eng'g. Ltd. v. Montgomery*, 825 F.2d 1084, 1090 (6th Cir. 1987), *cert. denied*, 485 U.S. 1008 (1988).

The petition will be denied for the above stated reasons, with each considered as an independent and alternative basis for denial. When the AAO denies a petition on multiple alternative grounds, a plaintiff can succeed on a challenge only if it is shown that the AAO abused its discretion with respect to all of the AAO's enumerated grounds. *See Spencer Enterprises, Inc.*, 229 F. Supp. 2d at 1043.

In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proving eligibility for the benefit sought remains entirely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act. Here, that burden has not been met. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

Finally, a review of the prior L-1 "new office" nonimmigrant petition approved on behalf of the beneficiary (WAC 02 229 53612) is warranted to determine if it was approved in error. As indicated above, the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary was employed abroad in a primarily managerial or executive capacity. Furthermore, as the record indicates that the petitioner was not the lessee of commercial space, it is likely that the petitioner would not have been able to establish that it had secured sufficient physical premises to house the "new office." *See* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(v)(A). Therefore, the director shall review the prior L-1 nonimmigrant petition approved on behalf of the beneficiary for possible revocation in accordance with 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(9).

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.

FURTHER ORDERED: The director shall review the prior L-1 nonimmigrant petition approved on behalf of the beneficiary for possible revocation pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(9).