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U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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File: SRC 05 118 50623 Office: TEXAS SERVICE CENTER Date: DEC 05 2006

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, Texas 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 president and managing director 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 limited liability company organized under the laws of the State of Florida and is allegedly a commercial maintenance contracting company.<sup>1</sup> The petitioner claims a qualifying relationship with A. Fisher Building & Glazing located in the United Kingdom. The beneficiary was initially granted a one-year period of stay to open a new office in the United States, and the petitioner now seeks to extend the beneficiary's stay for three years.

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, the petitioner asserts that the director erred in denying the petition because the record establishes that the beneficiary is employed in a primarily managerial or executive capacity.

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

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that, according to the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, the petitioner has been administratively dissolved due to its failure to satisfy the state's annual reporting requirements. Therefore, regardless of whether the petitioner's annual reporting issues in Florida can be easily remedied or not, this raises the critical issue of the company's continued existence as a legal entity in the United States. See Fla. Stat. 607.1421 (2006).

abroad with a qualifying organization within the three years preceding the filing of the petition.

- (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 whether the beneficiary is claiming to be primarily engaged in managerial duties under section 101(a)(44)(A) of the Act or primarily executive duties under section 101(a)(44)(B) of the Act. A beneficiary may not claim to be employed as a hybrid "executive/manager" and rely on partial sections of the two statutory definitions. If the petitioner is indeed representing the beneficiary as both an executive *and* a manager, it must establish that the beneficiary meets each of the four criteria set forth in the statutory definition for executive and the statutory definition for manager.

The petitioner described the beneficiary's job duties in a letter dated February 24, 2004 appended to the Form I-129:

[The beneficiary] has been and will continue to be for our US venture, ultimately responsible for the company's goals and policies and for the hiring and firing of all staff. He has also been and will continue to be responsible for the entire day to day, systematic operations of the company. [The beneficiary] will continue [to] retain overall accountability and delegate additional responsibilities with sub-contractors including the authority to oversee personnel who direct the activities of various facets of our company such as construction, restoration, general maintenance, accounting, advertising, procurement, and implement the organization's policies on a day-to-day basis.

The petitioner also indicates in the letter that it has three full-time employees. However, the 2004 wage reports, forms W-2, and forms 1099-MISC submitted for the petitioner reveal that the petitioner only

employed two people in 2004, the beneficiary and [REDACTED]. Moreover, the documents reveal that Mr. [REDACTED] was paid employee compensation of \$546.00 in 2004 plus \$6,835.00 in non-employee compensation. No information was provided for the other employee(s), and no job description was provided for [REDACTED].

On March 28, 2005, the director requested additional evidence. Specifically, the director requested evidence regarding the petitioner's employees including, but not limited to, their job duties.

In response, the petitioner submitted an organizational chart listing [REDACTED] as a "manager." The chart also named two subcontractors and a sales representative, although no corroborating evidence establishing their employment by the petitioner was submitted.

On April 11 2005, the director denied the petition. The director determined that the petitioner did not establish that the beneficiary will be employed in the United States in a primarily managerial or executive capacity.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that the director erred in denying the petition. Specifically, counsel to the petitioner asserts in the Form I-290B that the petitioner employs "three full time people who are first line supervisors, who thus supervise the other workers and sub-contractors who perform the work in the numerous aspects of the petitioner's business," and that these "supervisors" report to the beneficiary.

Upon review, the petitioner's assertions are not persuasive. Title 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(v)(C) allows the intended United States operation one year within the date of approval of the petition to support an executive or managerial position. There is no provision that allows for an extension of this one-year period. If the business is not sufficiently operational after one year, the petitioner is ineligible by regulation for an extension. In the instant matter, the petitioner has not reached the point that it can employ the beneficiary in a predominantly managerial or executive position as defined by law.

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.* The petitioner must specifically state whether the beneficiary is primarily employed in a managerial or executive capacity. As explained above, a petitioner cannot claim that some of the duties of the position entail executive responsibilities, while other duties are managerial. A beneficiary may not claim to be employed as a hybrid "executive/manager" and rely on partial sections of the two statutory definitions. If the petitioner is indeed representing the beneficiary as both an executive *and* a manager, it must establish that the beneficiary meets each of the four criteria set forth in the statutory definition for executive and the statutory definition for manager.

The petitioner has failed to prove 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 does on a day-to-day basis. For example, the petitioner states that the beneficiary is responsible for goals and policies and for the day-to-day operation of the business. The petitioner did not, however, specifically explain what the beneficiary does on a day-to-day basis. Moreover,

because of the vagueness of the job descriptions provided for the beneficiary and the subordinate employee(s) and the lack of employees available to relieve the beneficiary of performing non-qualifying administrative or operational tasks, it must be concluded that his operation of the company includes both managerial and non-qualifying duties. Importantly, because the petitioner fails to quantify the time the beneficiary spends on these administrative or operational tasks, the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary is acting primarily 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). 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). 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).

The petitioner also failed to prove that the beneficiary will supervise and control the work of other supervisory, professional, or managerial employees, or that he will manage an essential function within the organization. The petitioner has provided no information about its subordinate employees other than evidence that one employee, [REDACTED], was paid \$546.00 in 2004, and that the petitioner considers Mr. [REDACTED] to be a "manager." The petitioner provided no corroborating evidence establishing that the petitioner actually employed and compensated any other employees since its establishment.<sup>2</sup> Even if it had, the petitioner failed to establish that these employees or independent contractors were supervisory, professional, or managerial employees since no job descriptions were provided. While counsel asserts on appeal that the subordinate employees supervised other unnamed subcontractors, no corroborating evidence was submitted. The unsupported statements of counsel on appeal or in a motion are not evidence and thus are not entitled to any evidentiary weight. See *INS v. Phinpathya*, 464 U.S. 183, 188-89 n.6 (1984); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503 (BIA 1980).

Given the above, the beneficiary would appear to be a first-line supervisor, the provider of actual services, or a combination of both. A managerial or executive 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. 101(a)(44)(A)(iv) of the Act; see also *Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. at 604. There is no evidence in the record establishing that the subordinate employee(s) relieve the beneficiary of performing non-qualifying duties. Finally, since the record fails to reveal the educational or skill levels of the

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<sup>2</sup>While the petitioner provided evidence that [REDACTED] was compensated \$6,835.00 as an independent contractor in 2004, and also asserts that other subcontractors were employed by the petitioner, this evidence would not be sufficient to establish that the beneficiary supervised or controlled the work of other supervisory, professional, or managerial employees even if they were performing qualifying duties. The statute and the regulations are very specific that the beneficiary must supervise other *employees*. Independent contractors are not employees. See 26 C.F.R. § 31.3121(d)-1(c)(2).

subordinate employees, it cannot be determined if they rise to the level of professional employees.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the record does not prove that the beneficiary will be acting in a managerial capacity.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the petitioner has failed to prove 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" and receive only "general supervision or direction from higher level executives, the board of directors, or

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<sup>3</sup>In evaluating whether the beneficiary manages 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).

<sup>4</sup>While the petitioner has not specifically argued that the beneficiary manages an essential function of the organization, the record nevertheless does not support this position. 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(1)(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 manages an essential function. The petitioner's vague job description fails to document what proportion of the beneficiary's duties would be managerial functions and what proportion would be non-managerial. Absent a clear and credible breakdown of the time spent by the beneficiary performing his duties, as well as a clear explanation of the duties, the AAO cannot determine what proportion of his duties would be managerial, nor can it deduce whether the beneficiary is primarily performing 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).

stockholders of the organization." *Id.* As indicated above, the petitioner has failed to prove that the beneficiary, who is allegedly managing a few employees who are apparently engaged in providing services to customers, will be acting 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, the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary will be employed in a primarily managerial or executive capacity as required by 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3).

Beyond the decision of the director, a related issue is whether the petitioner has established that it has a qualifying relationship with the foreign entity.

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:

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

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." An "affiliate" is defined, in part, as "a legal entity owned and controlled by the same group of individuals, each owning and controlling approximately the same share or proportion of each entity."

The regulation and case law confirm that ownership and control are the factors that must be examined in determining whether a qualifying relationship exists between United States and foreign entities for purposes of this visa classification. *Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. 593 (BIA 1988); *see also Matter of Siemens Medical Systems, Inc.*, 19 I&N Dec. 362 (BIA 1986); *Matter of Hughes*, 18 I&N Dec. 289 (Comm. 1982). In the context of this visa petition, ownership refers to the direct or indirect legal right of possession of the assets of an entity with full power and authority to control; control means the direct or indirect legal right and authority to direct the establishment, management, and operations of an entity. *Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. at 595.

The documents appended to the initial Form I-129 petition reveal that the foreign entity is a "sole proprietorship" owned entirely by the beneficiary. The petitioner also provided an unsigned copy of a Limited Liability Company Operating Agreement indicating that the beneficiary and his spouse are each members of the petitioner.

Upon review, the petitioner has not established that it has a qualifying relationship with the foreign employer because the petitioner has provided insufficient evidence to establish the ownership and control of the United States operation. In this case, the petitioner has provided an unsigned operating agreement indicating that the

beneficiary and his spouse are each members of the limited liability company. Florida limited liability companies are regulated by the Florida Limited Liability Company Act. Fla. Stat. §§ 608.401 to 608.705. This law provides guidance on how a Florida limited liability company can evidence ownership interests by members. Section 608.4101 requires Florida limited liability companies to maintain records including, but not limited to, a list identifying each member by name and last known address. Fla. Stat. § 608.4101. Moreover, section 608.432(3) specifically permits limited liability companies to evidence a member's interest in the company by issuing a certificate of membership interest. Fla. Stat. § 608.432(3). In this case, the petitioner has failed to provide any of the documentation that it could, or must, maintain which would establish that the beneficiary owns or controls the limited liability company.

In addition, the unsigned operating agreement is insufficient to establish that the beneficiary owns or controls the petitioner. In order for the operating agreement to have any evidentiary value in establishing ownership and control, the petitioner would need to provide additional evidence establishing that the members have agreed to the terms of the operating agreement. In this case, there is no evidence that the members have ever agreed to the terms of the operating agreement.

Accordingly, the petitioner has failed to establish that it has a qualifying relationship with the foreign employer, and the petition may not be approved for this additional reason.

The initial approval of an L-1A new office petition does not preclude CIS from denying an extension of the original visa based on a reassessment of petitioner's qualifications. *Texas A&M Univ. v. Upchurch*, 99 Fed. Appx. 556, 2004 WL 1240482 (5th Cir. 2004). 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.

An application or petition that fails to comply with the technical requirements of the law may be denied by the AAO even if the Service Center does not identify all of the grounds for denial in the initial decision. *See Spencer Enterprises, Inc. v. United States*, 229 F. Supp. 2d 1025, 1043 (E.D. Cal. 2001), *aff'd*, 345 F.3d 683 (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Dor v. INS*, 891 F.2d 997, 1002 n. 9 (2d Cir. 1989) (noting that the AAO reviews appeals on a *de novo* basis).

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.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed.