

Invitation Letter for a B-1 Business Visitor Visa

By Bronwen Elizabeth Madden

Many U.S. companies welcome legitimate international business partners to the United States for various reasons, such as on-site training at their home facility. When applying for a B-1 Business Visitor Visa, a letter of invitation may help facilitate the visa application process. The invitation letter is a tool designed to clearly communicate the motives and planned activities of the business trip and declare the applicant's intentions to return to their country at the end of the visit. An invitation letter will not guarantee visa approval; however, below are tips for writing a good invitation letter.

Invitations letters need to be written in English and on official company letterhead. They must clearly indicate that their purpose is to request visa issuance and the type of visa sought (B-1 Business Visitor Visa).

The name of the individual requesting the visa must be stated in the invitation letter exactly how it appears on their passport. On occasion, a name may be phonetically misspelled on a person's passport. This is more common when their native alphabet does not have English characters. It is important that there be consistency across all documentation and the name in the invitation letter is identical to the spelling in their passport. Some cultures put the surname first while others place it last, which can cause confusion. By writing the surname in all capital letters, the Consular Officer will easily identify the individual's surname.

The invitation letter should state the individual's title, the name of the business or organization they represent, and their relationship to the host (e.g., distributor, JV partner, etc.). State the purpose of the visit; in this case the purpose of the visit would be for business. Necessary personal data, including the person's date of birth, city and country of birth, gender, marital status, and passport number is also required. Most countries, except for the United States, put the day before the month when writing dates. The host may prefer to spell out the month when writing dates to avoid confusion.

The letter should articulate the planned dates of travel, which are for a specific and limited time period. If the host intends to cover all visitor travel-related expenses, he or she needs to say so in the invitation letter. Evidence of funds to cover the visitor's expenses while in the United States is very important. The host's complete contact details should be included in the letter. On occasion, the Consular Officer may want to contact the host to verify or request additional information. Finally, the letter must be signed in blue ink.

Although the host may commit to covering all travel expenses while visiting the United States, the Consular Officer will most likely also want to see evidence of the applicant's financial stability and resources. Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) states: "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a nonimmigrant status." To qualify for a B1 Business Visitor Visa, all applicants must demonstrate they possess a residence abroad they have no intention of abandoning. Applicants prove the existence of such residence by demonstrating that they have financial and social ties abroad that would compel them to leave the United States at the end of the temporary stay. The law places this burden of proof on the applicant.

The host must mail the invitation letter directly to the visa applicant via courier to ensure timely delivery. Invitation letters should not be mailed to the Consular Section; supporting documents are rarely accepted in advance of the interview. When the visa applicant goes to their interview, he or she should bring the original invitation letter (copies do not suffice) along with their required documentation. Applicants should always check the Consular Section's website for a complete list of required documentation and other helpful information covering the application process.

It is important to remember that a letter of invitation is not sufficient alone, nor is it a guarantee for visa qualification. An invitation letter is not a required document but it does offer documentary evidence supporting the case for visa issuance and may ease the visa application process. Each individual must qualify on their own merits. Below is a sample invitation letter.

Sample Letter: This is an example only. If used, please be sure to adapt the specific details for your company and employees.



August 23, 2009

Embassy of the United States of America
Attn: Non-immigrant Visa Services Section
Kilometer 5 ½ Carretera Sur
In front of the "Parque las Piedrecitas"
Managua, Nicaragua

Action Requested: Visa Issuance

To The Non-immigrant Visa Services Section:

Our company, ABC Corporation, designs and manufactures industrial systems out of our headquarters in Chicago, IL. We have been in business for 30 years and currently have 50 employees with annual sales of XXX. Historically, over 90 percent of our sales have been within the U.S., but in the last few years we have recognized the opportunities, and necessity, of pursuing international sales. Our current focus is on Latin America.

We have recently signed an agreement with Nica Industries of Managua, Nicaragua. They will be the official representative for sales, technical support, and product distribution for ABC Corporation in Central America. ABC Corporation and Nica Industries have a number of mutual customers and this agreement is a natural fit for both our business interests.

ABC Corporation has recently added a sales manager (personal details below) to handle our product line and would like him to visit Chicago, Illinois for intense technical and sales training on our products. We also plan to visit a number of our customers in the U.S. so that Nica Industries can see how our products are used in the industry. The total time for the visit will be 15 days, beginning September 24, 2009 and ending October 9, 2009. He will be staying in the XXX Hotel located at full address. ABC Corporation will be covering all travel, lodging, and meal expenses for the duration of their visit in the U.S.

GARCIA CRUZ, Jorge Luis	
Sales Manager, Nica Industries	Passport Number: XXX
Address	Gender: Male
Managua, Nicaragua	Marital Status: Married
Phone Number:+ 505-5555-5555	Date of Birth: January 05, 19XX
Direct Line: +505-5555-5555	Place of Birth: Managua, Nicaragua
Fax: +505-5555-5555	Home Address: XXX
Email: jorge@nicaind.com	Home Phone: XXX

The distributor partnership we have with Nica Industries will allow ABC Corporation to supply many companies, including U.S. operations, manufacturing products in Central America. It is an opportunity for these firms to benefit from our products as well as a competitive necessity for our business here in the United States.

Thank you for your assistance. I believe Mr. Garcia has an appointment schedule on DATE for his visa interview. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached by e-mail at john@abccorp.com or on my mobile at +1 (555) 555-5555.

Sincerely,

John Smith
President

Enclosures: Passports Copies
Financial Statement

Cc: Name, USEAC Director, Chicago U.S. Export Assistance Center
Name, International Trade Specialist, Chicago U.S. Export Assistance Center