

O-1 VISA QUICK-START GUIDE: 7 STEPS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW TO JUMPSTART YOUR AMERICAN DREAM

ACTION ITEM #4. GET SOME MEDIA BUZZ: “PUBLISHED MATERIAL IN MAJOR MEDIA.”



So far we've looked at 3 "substance" action items: (1) structuring your O-1 petition, (2) picking your niche, and (3) making a ruckus in your niche. With #4 we're moving into the fun parts: gathering "acclaim" for you and your achievements.

WHERE WE ARE: A RECAP OF OUR 7 ACTION ITEMS.

The next 4 action items won't be so much about what you DO. They'll be more about collecting ACCLAIM for what you do. For O-1 purposes, this is just as important as actually doing cool stuff! If you do amazing things, but you do them invisibly, your O-1 case isn't going to go too well.

For these 4 acclaim topics, we're going to start visualizing some piles of gold nuggets that we want to collect for your petition. They're small piles, but they're big nuggets.

We want at least 4 little piles. We want a pile of media articles. We want a pile of awards. We want a pile of competitions that you judge. And we want a pile of technical articles that you write.

We're going to collect these four piles. Each of them will have 3 to 7 big gold nuggets. Underneath each pile of gold nuggets, we'll also collect a bunch of little silver nuggets. They're smaller, but they're really important. They explain what your gold nuggets are, where they come from, and why they're shiny gold and not just fakes.

When we've done that - BOOM! That's it. Your treasure hunt is pretty much done! We've got a few more things to do - but those 7 things, right there, are the core of your successful O-1 petition.

7 THINGS.

3 substantive things.

1. Organize your O-1 petition.
2. Pick your O-1 niche.
3. Make a ruckus in your niche.

Then 4 acclaim things.

4. Get some press coverage.
5. Enter some competitions.
6. Judge some competitions.
7. Write some technical articles.

Wow. That's it. 7 things. Let's keep going!

YOUR FIRST "ACCLAIM" TASK: GET SOME BUZZ.

OK, on to Action Item #4. The "acclaim" category that's most important to your success is media coverage. The O-1 regulations call this *"published material in professional or major trade publications, newspapers or other major media about the beneficiary and the beneficiary's work in the field for which classification is sought."*

This will either be the really fun part, or the really terrible part, depending on whether you're an extrovert or an introvert. Either way, media coverage has to happen. There are 3 required elements that have to be in your evidence package for each article, to make your nuggets shiny gold:

- The article has to be in provably "major media," with reputation evidence and circulation data about the publication.
- It has to be "about" you and your work.
- It has to be provenanced with the publication's name, location, title, author, date, and URL.

ELEMENT #1: PROVABLY "MAJOR" MEDIA.

What on earth does this mean? This element is actually so important, and USCIS is so bizarrely obsessed with actually seeing EVIDENCE that your press coverage is in "major media," that we're going to start with picking the publications, and work backward from there.

We're going to reverse-engineer this whole topic. Let's start by making a list of the sites and publications in your field that are major. What publications can you prove have a great circulation, they're read on a national or international basis, they have a huge following and a "big" reputation? What are the popular video and audio broadcasts in your field that are national or international in scope?

I'm sure you already know. You can also do some searches like "top 10 European tech publications" or "most authoritative sources for gaming news." The format of the items doesn't matter. They can be paper magazines, online publications, cable or radio broadcasts, or online video and audio broadcasts. (We'll go into detail on formatting these items for maximum evidentiary impact in a future series.)

For now, we're looking for your industry's equivalents of the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Financial Times, Bloomberg News, and MSNBC. We can also look at big blogging sites like Forbes and the Huffington Post.

For tech, this might be TechCrunch, Wired, Fast Company, or Inc. Magazine. USCIS has a pretty traditional outlook on these matters, so it doesn't have to be the most cutting-edge, trending, or splashy new publication. Ideally it should be something they've heard of, which means it's been around long enough for late adopters to know about it.

Another great resource is professional and technical journals in your field. Is there a publication that's known as "the bible of the industry"? If so, that's a great place to pitch your story.

Here's why this is important. Your media coverage needs to be NOT just regional or local. Regional and local are the kiss of death for your media coverage category. They basically prove the opposite of what you want to show. They make you look small. And if you look small, your O-1 probably isn't going to work.

This is a hard concept to grasp, when you already have some local press coverage that you're proud of, and you want to use what you've got in your petition. I'm sorry, I know it's cool, but to your adjudicator, it makes you look non-extraordinary. That's why we're going to reverse-engineer this and start with a clean slate.

So make a list of the places where, basically, you want to appear, and then start pitching. Shine up your cool venture into a compelling storyline. Ask for help from your VCs, your investors, your mentors, and your industry leaders. Make friends with journalists and thought leaders. Help THEM out. They're always looking for high-quality content, so give them something interesting to talk about.

If you need to build buzz for your O-1 petition quickly, you might even consider hiring a publicist.

Here's a fact that might surprise you, if you're feeling shy about approaching folks in the major leagues. Most famous people are incredibly eager to help hard-working, resourceful entrepreneurs with their US immigration petitions. They really, genuinely want to help you build your company in America.

So many prominent people have been through this themselves. They know firsthand how hard it is. They enjoy being generous by paying it forward - and they're happy to be asked. If they can't help you, they probably know someone who can.

ELEMENT #2: "ABOUT" YOU AND YOUR WORK.

Your adjudicator wants to see media coverage that makes you "look big." So let's give him a lot of that.

You want to compile "major media" items with headlines that mention you, or your company, by name. They should be substantive stories about you, and the cool thing that you're building in the world. It would be great to see your photo or a video, if possible, and maybe some visuals of your company or product.

It's OK if your co-founders are in there too - but there should be a LOT of stuff about you, interviews with you, quotes from you, other cool people describing you and the great thing you're doing. You want to look newsworthy, because you are.

You can do as many angles as there are stories. You can talk about the enormity of the problems that your shiny thing is solving. Or the challenges that you've overcome to build it. You can talk about how your thing is different from every other thing that's come before it. Or how much better the world is now, for all the people who are using your thing.

You definitely want buzz for things that are created, not for things that are an idea in the future.

Here are some types of evidence that don't work that well in the "media coverage" category. Local and regional press coverage, we've already discussed why that's best omitted. Articles that mention you in passing, or random photos of you in a group, aren't really very probative. The item can't just be about your company or industry - it should mention you by name. And it should be about your work and your product, not your beach volleyball championship.

ELEMENT #3: PROVENANCE. THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT.

"Provenance" means that every media item that you file as an exhibit, needs to show the following facts clearly and explicitly.

- The name of the publication.
- The country of publication.
- The full title of the article.
- The date of publication.

- The full name of the author.
- For printouts of online articles: A footer showing the page title, the page URL, and the date printed.

This sounds so simple, right? IT IS! It's super simple. It's basic Attention to Detail 101. But getting this easy element wrong, is probably the cause of more O-1 petition denials, than all the other substantive factors put together.

You would not believe how many O-1 applicants just DO NOT DO THIS. They file junk. Or fragments. Or something that looks like a great article, but you can't tell where in the world it was published, or who wrote it, or when, or in what publication.

Paying attention to provenance makes you look professional. Polished. Effortlessly accomplished. Extraordinary. It makes you look big. It's a pretty basic entry point to looking like a person who deserves an O-1 visa.

Getting these details right lets your adjudicator relax. It tells him that you've got his back. You score high on the credibility index. You're making it easy for him to approve your O-1 petition and then go to lunch.

Compare that with a petition that's got some errors and incompletions. There are 2 or 3 exhibits that don't show where the article appeared, or what the title was, or when it came out, or who wrote it.

This will pull a little trigger of suspicion in your adjudicator's mind. He'll start to wonder. Did your best friend write this for you as a puff piece? Does this publication really exist? Is the article 10 years old? Where was this anonymous clipping actually published? What else is the matter with this petition?

Small details like this will light a fuse of suspicion that burns right through the rest of your evidence. Your adjudicator will start looking for more things that are wrong. You can bet, he'll find them. This is the road to O-1 hell. Your petition definitely won't get approved before lunch.

Provenance is a ridiculously easy win. It sets you WAY far above 90% of the other applicants in your adjudicator's pile of cases today.

So, your assignment, Action Item #4: Get Some Buzz! Make a list of the publications you want to be in, and work backward from there. Work up some interesting angles. Pitch some journalists. Use your network. Ask your more influential friends to help you out with this. Most people will be delighted to do something useful to help you with your O-1 visa!

Collect 4 to 6 high-quality articles about you and your work. They don't have to be long, but they have to be substantive and on point. Provenance your articles. Start collecting those nuggets, and before you know it, they're going to pile up into a winning O-1 petition.