

LEARN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF E-APOSTILLES

THE
**APOSTILLE AGENTS'
SURVIVAL GUIDE**

A NOT-SO-SECRET REFERENCE HANDBOOK
TO INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENT SERVICES



JUDI LAWRENCE & MATT MILLER

**What People are Saying about
The Apostille Agents' Survival Guide**

I became acquainted with Ms. Judi Lawrence three years ago when I became the Honorary Hungarian Consulate in Philadelphia. Ms. Lawrence was extremely helpful to my family and my clients with important documentation, including international document services and especially during the pandemic when it was almost impossible to communicate with anyone.

Ms. Lawrence was kind enough to share a preview of the wonderfully written book she and Mr. Matt Miller, the President of the California League of Independent Notaries wrote which is slated to be published next month. I believe that this book will be beneficial to our community, including students and other professionals, not to mention all of us everywhere who have settled into this wonderful country.

To my fellow Hungarians ... if you have documents which require apostilles and/or legalization, before you do anything I recommend that you contact Ms. Lawrence and allow her to review the documents and give you her recommendations. I have sent several people to her and no one has ever been disappointed.

—*E Schwartz, Honorary Consulate to Hungary in Philadelphia*

My first thought after being asked to read The Apostille Agents' Survival Guide was, this could be what we've all been waiting for! We have our training and varying levels of experience but wouldn't it be nice to have a handbook? Needless to say, I was not disappointed. I was familiar and comfortable with an extensive background in international operations and services when adding an assortment of Mobile Notary services, on a full-time basis. But we all know, every situation is unique and whether or not we are acting

in the capacity of a Notary Public, or an apostille agent, our clients expect us to get the job done and done right, the first time. This book helps us do just that. I keep this book at arm's reach when seeking clarity in a variety of situations. Readers will enjoy success stories and lessons learned, based

on the authors' real-life experiences. It is a concise outline of easy to follow instructions with a wealth of information and resources. Thank you Judi and Matt!

—*M Klempner, Ft Lauderdale, FL*

If you are serious about the Apostille business this is a MUST read book by Judi Lawrence and Matt Miller. Did I say book! This is a step-by-step guide, a reference resource, a workbook and so much more. Everything you will need to be a successful Apostille Agent can be found in these pages. This guide will help facilitate your classroom learning and business acumen.

—*P Bridges, Chicago, IL*

Judi Lawrence and Matt Miller have provided an indispensable guide for the Apostille facilitator community. Their clear concise and coherent instructions in this book helps to reiterate the valuable lessons learned from their courses. As a valued facilitator you are reminded that attention to detail is your number one skill for serving your clients and completing an Apostille certification. Thank you for the expertise you shared and time dedicated to compile

this vital book.
Washington, D.C.

—*L Levin,*

I have had a front row seat as to the amount of time and work Judi and Matt put into this book. Now that I have read the book I want to say that it exceeded my expectations. They have taken us through the history and the processes with clarity and precision. As an owner of a RON platform I understand the correlation and effort it takes to facilitate an Apostille via RON. I know that everyone in this business will benefit by keeping this book right beside them.

—*A Sietz, Columbus, OH*

This book is an exciting addition to the information available to notary entrepreneurs. THE APOSTILLE AGENT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE is more than a how-to opus for notaries public; it is a demonstration of a proactive approach to

understanding and addressing the needs of the customers notaries serve. The information in this book is the result of many hours of research and experience. Kudos to the authors, Judi Lawrence and Matt Miller. They have definitely provided an indispensable roadmap for notaries to use to expand their businesses; more importantly, they have provided a vehicle for helping millions of people who need documents Apostilled or Authenticated for use in foreign countries and are frustrated and overwhelmed by this often

complex and unfamiliar process. I highly recommend this book to every notary – even those who don't anticipate becoming Apostille Agents. It provides the kind of in-depth, specialized knowledge that defines a truly professional notary.

—L Hamm, Helena, MT

Learn About the Future of E-Apostilles

THE APOSTILLE AGENTS' SURVIVAL GUIDE

**A NOT-SO-SECRET REFERENCE HANDBOOK
TO INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENT SERVICES**

BY JUDI LAWRENCE AND MATT MILLER

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As we are in the midst of a world pandemic, information regarding SOS offices, DOS offices and guidelines are continuously changing and we hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

There is NO GUARANTEE that employing the same techniques, ideas, strategies, products or services we discuss will produce the same results for you. Your earning potential is entirely dependent upon you, and your respective market. Building an Apostille business, whether passive or active takes time, dedication and A LOT of hard work.

DEDICATION

“A book is a gift that you can open again and again”

—Garrison Keillor

We listened, and we heard you by creating a Reference Handbook that will be by your side as you continue to learn

this business. We cannot wait until you read it! We are dedicating this book to you, our readers and are inviting you to take a journey into the world of ***International Document Services***. We are excited that you have decided to expand your knowledge and whether you have an existing business or are a new entrepreneur, we wish you every success.

FOREWORD

The secret is out!

This career that so many of us have “discovered” as a mobile Notary, Loan Signing Agent, Apostille Agent, Field Inspector, and so much more under the *Notary Umbrella*, brings joy, flexibility, and considerable revenue.

I've certainly been able to find some solid footing here. The journey & process of finding my niche here took me quite a long time as a serial entrepreneur, and I failed often (and hard) along the way.

In retrospect, every one of those failures helped me become exactly who I needed to become in order to make this business work the way it has. And I am not alone. Like outliers in some post-apocalyptic movie saga, competent &

resourceful Notaries Public around the country have used their prior experiences to carve their own niche, finding some special way to “nail it & scale it,” to create an *unexpected* dream business.

The authors of the book that you hold in your hands are two examples of that. Even with 2,893 miles of American soil between them, modern technology and an emerging community of these *Credentialed Professionals* allowed Matt & Judi to connect on their shared passion of advocacy, care, and support for those on the path behind them.

What a gift for the rest of us on that path!

Whatever you've paid for this book, I assure you it pales in comparison to the *true* value contained within its pages. What you pay for when you buy a book like this is *perspective & experience*. “The Apostille Agents' Survival Guide; The Not-

So-Secret Reference Handbook to International Document Services” is infused with over sixty years of professional wisdom and expertise applied now to a lucrative, and as of yet, still obscure micro-niche in our industry.

Matt & Judi’s previous six decades of combined work experience and commitment to helping others, has culminated in the success they experience today. Let that be a lesson to you as well as you embark on your journey as an Apostille Agent. You have done hard things before. You have succeeded in endeavors. You’ve been promoted, rewarded, and held in high esteem.

Bring all of that with you here. It will serve you well.

My wish for you is that you wake up each morning pinching

yourself because your business feels “too good to be true.” I know it’s true. It happened for me, and thousands of others I have coached along the way. You know it can be true for you too. That’s why you’re here, learning & growing, expanding your lines of service...and revenue.

And when you get there, remember to emulate your two mentors/authors of this book, Matt & Judi, and shine a light back for the rest of us. Help show us the way.

Bill Soroka

Author, Sign & Thrive: How to Make Six Figures as a Mobile Notary and Loan Signing Agent and host of The SideHustle Lounge Podcast

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Bill Anderson - Thank you for your feedback and suggestions. We really appreciate your expert insight and the time you gave us. You are a fantastic community professional and we are grateful for your hard work and dedication to the profession.

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Lyn Harley – My cousin and my friend. Thank you for everything that you are and everything that you do. Your words of encouragement have gone a long way as I travel this journey. You are a wonderful person Lyn, with a heart big enough to support all of us and I hope we have lots more holidays and good times together.

Ed Twyman – My friend, you left us way too young and way too early. But I know in my heart that you are sitting up there with this book in your hand and with all the support and love you gave me and my business while you were here. I know that you have found a great place to listen to jazz and I pray that you rest in peace.

Darry Turrock – Thanks for everything you do. You always have our backs but more than that, you really care about our success. The last several months have been kind of surreal and we could not have come this far without you.

Laura Biewer – There is a reason why you are the “GOAT”. Your vast knowledge and understanding of notarial law and procedure is what we counted on to make sure this book was on point. Your careful choice of words of support and encouragement mean a great deal to us. Working with you is always a learning experience and we appreciate your

guidance as we continue on this journey. We look forward to working together in the future.

Bill Soroka – Dolly Parton says, “The Way I See It, If You Want the Rainbow, You Have to Put Up with the Rain”. You have emerged from the rain into this amazing person who challenges people to do their best every day. We are honored to have been the recipient of your kindness. Whether filming a podcast, writing a book or just questioning whether we can emerge from the rain that day, you are always there. Thank you is inadequate. We are so looking forward to seeing what the future holds for all of us.

Edith Schwartz – Your unexpected support and friendship mean so much to me. With such a large (and wonderful) family and so many other responsibilities, you always make time for me. When you come into my office you are a beacon

of light. I am looking forward to working with you for a long time to come.

Linda Mitchell – John Leonard said, “it takes a long time to grow an old friend.” So many decades of friendship, the good times and the not-so-good times, and much more to come. Thanks for supporting this book and for everything else I do. Whatever this year brings for you, I will be there for you.

Shyvette Brown – Whatever would I do without you my friend. Our conversations would fill a book, not just a couple of sentences. Your support and friendship are deeply appreciated and I still say one day we will get that mike and tell them all what we think. Can you imagine that?

Clubhouse – Yes, it is just a social media app and yes this time next year it may be replaced by a newer social media app but

for us, it has brought new friends into our world that will not be replaced:

Michele Klempler, Your sunny personality and your meticulous attention to whomever or whatever you are doing truly resonate. You have become a true friend and I know we are going to “knock-em out of the park” and have fun as we do it. Thanks for your support of this book, and us.

Amy Seitz – Every day is an adventure – We are so glad that you came into our orbit. We believe your creativity and amazing skills will take you far. We truly admire what you are accomplishing and you know we support Cyberizeit all the way. Thanks for all of your support.

Larry Levin - You are a perfectionist in all that you do. In addition to your notary work, we love your photography and

we are just going to sit back and watch the great things that you will do.

Patricia Bridges – If you looked up the word “perfection” in the dictionary, you would probably find your picture. Thank you for all of your support and friendship. If we can catch you between all of your classes and all of your signings, we will continue to have great conversations. We respect your “mobility”.

Roger and Jane Willig - Oprah Winfrey said, “Lot of People Want to Ride With You in the Limo, But What You Want is for Someone to Take The Bus With You When the Limo Breaks Down.” This says it all. I know we would take that bus together if we had to. Your friendship, love and support mean everything.

Lori Hamm: Your support and encouragement along with your shared knowledge and expertise, were the foundation of our motivation to complete this book. Thank you for taking the time to listen to us and guide us in the right direction. We look forward to seeing you in the Spring.

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FREE RESOURCES

When you buy this book, you will immediately have access to a private purchaser's page with links to free resources, including:

1. Nationwide Apostille Agent Database.
2. Zoom info sessions with Judi and Matt.
3. Discount coupon code for Lawrence Institute for Notaries

(“LIN”) Apostille courses.

4. Downloadable forms.

5. Links to Competent Authorities.

6. Training Videos.

7. Much more.

Go to: <https://www.allaboutapostilles.com/resources>

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE

“Whatever Your Mind Can Conceive and Believe, It Can Achieve.”
—Napoleon Hill

As I have shared with many of my students, my career as a Notary and Apostille Agent is a reinvented one. One day I was a middle-aged woman with a job at a law firm that I truly loved and I was certain it would be the place I would call home for years to come, and then one afternoon I was a middle-aged woman without a job and without a life plan. I found out very quickly that although I was highly skilled and my work ethic was unmatched, because of my age, I was not going to get another job with another law firm. I later

learned that administrators quickly mark your resume as “TO” (too old).

I grieved for a while. I was totally unsure of what was ahead. I was single and self-supporting but more importantly, I felt my brain deteriorating. I was not ready to sit home and watch People’s Court all day. Why am I telling you this? It has nothing to do with Apostilles. I am telling you this because I want every one of you to know that it is never too late. I believe that opportunity knocks, but you must open the door to let it in. Listen carefully to what is being put in front of you. Maybe the first thing won’t be your “it” and it may not even be the second thing, but keep listening because it will be right for you and you will know it when it comes.

And suddenly, everything changed for me when I needed a notary. I was a notary but you cannot notarize for yourself. Vicky came to my home and did the job. When she left, a light

bulb went on in my head and I thought, “I just paid Vicky \$100.00 to notarize documents for me, why isn’t someone paying me for the same thing? It was that day that I created my first Notary Company.

I was fortunate for three reasons. The first reason was my unmatched work ethic. Starting a business is hard and you need to be “all in”. You are providing professional services and you are the bookkeeper, you are tech support, the marketer and sometimes the cleaning person. I was fiercely determined and now, 7 years later, my determination is stronger than ever.

The second reason was that I knew that it was important not to do just one thing. I am a notary, a loan signing agent and an Apostille agent I have co-authored a Book with Daniel C Lewis which we recently updated and this new book is my pride and joy. By the time you are reading this, my Apostille

classes will be marketed in Spanish and then perhaps some other languages. *When I worked for the law firm, it was all I had. I will never let that happen to myself ever again.*

My third reason was luck. I cannot list here all of the people, friends and colleagues who believed in me and supported and continue to support my endeavors. That is especially true of my co-author, colleague and friend, Matt Miller. Matt, writing this book with you has been so much hard work but so much fun and I look forward to our future projects.

I created LIN (the Lawrence Institute for Notaries) so that I could share my knowledge of the notary and Apostille world but, in addition, I wanted to make sure that people know that they too can recreate themselves or, if they are already successful, become even more successful. All you need to do is keep trying and it will happen.

For me, nothing makes me happier than when a student calls, excited because they became a notary or an Apostille agent and just got their first job. I am very fortunate and if I can share this with even one of you and by doing so help you to succeed, I will have done what I set out to do.

MEET THE AUTHORS

“Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.”

—*Benjamin Franklin*

Ever think that across the country there would be two people, not only conducting the same business but who share the same values? (i.e., they both found a business they not only love but became successful at doing.) And, as a bonus, they both want to share it with others so they can also become successful. Those two people are your co-authors, Judi Lawrence of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Matt Miller of San Francisco, California.

Judi says, “having met Matt frequently on Clubhouse and

being privy to his intelligence and knowledge of our industry, not to mention his advocacy for notaries across the country, we could not help but notice that we shared this common bond of wanting to help people succeed. It seemed like the most natural thing in the world to become co-authors and share our knowledge of a trending and exciting business which will ***add an enhanced revenue stream*** to a new or existing business.”

Matt says, “I was elated to not only meet someone who is as passionate about international authentication work as I am, but someone who truly cares about the notary community as well. Connecting with Judi has brought me to a whole new level of community involvement that I don't know how I would have ever achieved on my own. As a notary advocate, it's important to me that the notary community comes together around our common values and pull each other up

so that we can all share the fruits of each others' successes. Judi and I share this kind of spirit in our passion for the work we do and the notary business/community as a whole.”

Although we did not know Benjamin Franklin personally, we knew right away that because we both have been doing something worth writing, this book is something worth reading. We both **KNOW** this book will help you achieve great success as an Apostille Agent and we encourage you to get involved in the notary/business community. Together we

grow, divided we struggle.

Okay, now, let's delve into **APOSTILLES, CERTIFICATIONS AND LEGALIZATIONS**, *The Not-So-Secret Reference Guide to International Documents*. This book will help you through the learning process. We guarantee it will not sit on your shelf, but that you will be using this reference book often and for a very long time.

INTRODUCTION

“Without a plan, even the most brilliant business can get lost. You need to have goals, create milestones and have a strategy in place to set yourself up for success.”

—Yogi Berra

Welcome to **APOSTILLES, CERTIFICATIONS & LEGALIZATIONS**, *The Not-So-Secret Reference Guide to International Document Services.*

Reading this book is an important first step to beginning or enhancing your career as an Apostille Agent. The book will explain this **UNRESTRICTED FEE BUSINESS** to you. We will discuss the procedures and we will walk you, step-by-step, through the processes. You will learn about the Hague Convention, how to **AUTHENTICATE** your document(s), how to use social media to engage your clients and how to start your own business, whether it be full-time or part-time.

SO, GET READY, PUT YOUR FEET UP AND
LET’S DIG INTO THIS IMPORTANT REFERENCE BOOK!

JUDI'S WINNDOW

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."

—Seneca

It has been almost two years since we wrapped our arms around a pandemic and experienced what most of us have never imagined – a complete shutdown of the world. Looking back, I think one of the most important lessons that we, as business owners and entrepreneurs, learned is that we needed to pivot, and going forward we need to not only **WORK HARD** and **WORK SMART**, we must also diversify our businesses *and be careful not to put all our eggs in one basket*. So, whether you recently retired, lost your job, have reduced hours, or just want to add a new revenue stream,

you will benefit from learning the Apostille business and the opportunities it can create.

To assist you, I have created a Six Step Strategy to help you stay focused as you start and build your Apostille Business which I have called **JUDI'S WINNDOW**. If you are making decisions, such as whether you want to do this full-time or part-time, this will provide you with a clear path to follow.

And now we will open **JUDI'S WINDOW** and continue on this exciting journey together.

WHY DO YOU NEED TRAINING?

- Become familiar with the history of an Apostille;
- Learn the processes and procedures;
- Become fluent in understanding state guidelines;

- Understand the difference between a Hague Country vs a Non-Hague Country;
- Understand Embassy Legalization; and
- Know how to obtain a federal Apostille versus a State Apostille.

Remember, people must see you as the expert. You should invest time and money to obtain proper training to prepare you for that first phone call requesting an Apostille.

ITEMS IN PLACE

- Where and how will you meet with clients;
- How will you get document(s) to the SOS or the DOS;
- Have you set up overnight shipping accounts;
- Do you have a good tracking system;
- How will you accept payments?

Are you ready, or will you be scrambling when you do get your first Apostille request?

NNA HOTLINE

- The NNA Hotline is a national treasure. If you are a member of the NNA, by calling in you can get answers to your questions or clarifications as to whether you are doing something right or wrong. To reach the Hotline call 1-800-876-6827 and press 4.

NETWORKING

You will need to hit the ground running. It is imperative that you create a social media presence and let people know who you are, where you are and that you offer Apostille and Legalization services.

DUE DILIGENCE

Research is the key. You must do your homework:

- Who is your competition;
- Where is your competition located;
- What types of services are they offering;
- Where are you going to find clients; and
- Your budget is important, be mindful of your expenses.

OWNING YOUR OWN BUSINESS

This clearly means “the buck stops with you”. Many think that it means you can do anything you want, any time you want. But you still have a boss... it’s your clients. And you still have responsibilities to your clients, yourself and your

business.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

You need to have a website presence. Your website is your mirror, it reflects who you are. In the beginning, make sure it includes:

- Who you are;
- Where you are;
- What you do; and
- How to contact you.

Now that you have opened **JUDI’S WINNDOW to** follow the strategy to success, if you follow this plan, step by step, you will create an extra income stream in a short period of time.

PART 1

WHAT IS AN APOSTILLE AND WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT IT?

1. What Is an Apostille?

We could fill this book with thousands of definitions of what an Apostille is, sometimes referred to as “**APOSTEEES**”. Almost every Secretary of State posts their own definition, i.e.,

Cambridge Dictionary says:

“An Apostille is an official certificate from a government that makes a document from one country acceptable in another, or the system of using such certificates.”

The Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)

says:

“A certificate issued under the Apostille Convention authenticating the origin of a public Document(s).”

The Secretary of State of Maryland says:

“Apostilles do not certify the content of the public document(s) to which it relates. They do not grant authority and they do not give any additional weight to the content of the underlying document(s). An apostille may never be used for the recognition of a document(s) in the country where that document(s) was issued.”

The next sentence is what Judi and Matt call a *plain definition* ...

“An Apostille is the cover placed on the document(s) allowing the document(s) to be used in a foreign country.”

2. Benefits of Being an Apostille Agent

The most frequently asked question we are asked is “What are the benefits of becoming an Apostille Agent?”

a. Matt says, “By adding this new revenue stream to services I was offering, customers were impressed by the fact that I was reaching out beyond basic notarization and offering new and trending types of services.”

b. Judi says, “The second benefit is that it added to my present customer base.” She continues, “often someone will come into my office to get a simple notarization and they see the word “Apostille“ and ask what it means. I explain and then they suddenly remember that their aunt or their cousin needed an Apostille just last month. I respond by saying that the next time they need an Apostille they should call me and they often do.”

c. Another benefit is that this service is an unrestricted fee business. You can only charge what a notary is permitted to charge in your state if you are notarizing the document(s) and of course, the Secretary of State sets their own Apostille fees. But you can charge for the time it takes to pick up the document(s) and deliver them, charge for getting them to the Secretary of State or the Department of State, you can charge for research and whatever else you do to make the transaction occur. Now, this is not to say that you can charge thousands of dollars for an Apostille ... that would not be acceptable practice. The expression is “what the market bears”. You will need to do your due diligence and determine what the market in your specific area will bear and then charge accordingly. Sometimes there is competition in your own backyard that is facilitating Apostilles and you will want to be competitive. You may consider charging a lower

fee than your competition so that you can begin to build your business. Hanging out your shingle and charging much more than anyone else will work against you. **Judi says**, “In my case, I charged much less than anyone else in my area until I understood the business and had some clients under my belt and then I raised my fees accordingly.”

The second most frequently asked question we are asked is, “Why would someone hire you if they can do it themselves?”

The answer is that even though there is information available on the Internet, people who try doing this on their own often encounter rejections because they have no knowledge of the processes. In our experience, people who try it on their own don't do it again.

3. What Are Your Functions of An Apostille Agent?

Your functions of the Apostille Agent are as follows:

- Notarizing (or have someone else notarize) the document(s) which require notarization.
- Learning what original document(s) are needed or can you present Copy Certifications to the Secretary of State (you will need to check your state guidelines to see if your state allows this.) Even if your state allows Copy Certifications, you must never use this method of notarization for vital statistics document(s) such as a Birth Certificate, a Death Certificate, a Marriage License or a Divorce Decree.)
- You will, in fact be doing the “pre-certification” of documents for your customers thereby assuring that their documents will be processed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- Establishing if the specific Secretary of State accepts a remotely notarized document(s).
- Knowing how to determine whether the document(s) are being presented to a Hague Country or a Non-Hague country.
- Knowing what cover page to send with the document(s).
- Researching the fee structure.
- Learning how many copies are required; and
- Ascertaining if translation is necessary.

Before offering to assist people obtain Apostilles or Authentications, understand that you will be wearing two hats during the transactions; you will be both the merchant and the customer. As the merchant you have to know the product or service you are providing; as the customer, you

should get to know the suppliers that you will be dealing with.

One of the most prevalent reasons we had for writing this book was one of the most frequently asked questions we get asked, which is,

“I really want to learn Apostilles, but I called my Secretary of State, and I was told, ‘only we do that’ so it looks like in my state I cannot be an apostille agent. Is that true?”

And our answer always is,

“Yes, that is the truth, no matter what state the document(s) is being Apostillised or legalized, only a Secretary of State can put the actual seal and government crest on the document(s). But you, Apostille Agents and/or Facilitator, can make the process **professional**, **timely** and **correct**. You can explain to a client the state of origination of

the document(s), the country of destination where the document(s) will be used, whether it needs to be sent to a Secretary of State or to the State Department, etc. You can show the client the correct order form, explain the correct fee and the preferred return shipping label. ***You can make all the difference.***”

While you may think obtaining an apostille for an individual client might be a once-in-a-while necessity, as an apostille agent you will have many reasons to obtain an apostille. Below is a list of events and activities that often require apostille services:

- Adopting Children Abroad;
- Background Checks (federal and/or state);
- Destination Weddings;
- Estate Matters;

- Inheritance Matters;
- Job Transfers;
- Making Aliyah to Israel;
- Obtaining Overseas Patents;
- Overseas Banking;
- Pension Verifications;
- People Relocating or Teaching Abroad;
- Overseas Real Estate Transactions;
- Proof of Birth and/or Proof of Death;
- Starting a new Business Overseas; and
- Verification of Identity.

Below are some, but not all of the document(s) you may be asked to Apostille:

- Adoption Document(s);
- Authorization Letters;
- Background Checks (Local, State, FBI);
- Birth Certificates;
- Business Documentation;
- Copy of U.S. Passports;
- Copy of Driver Licenses;
- Corporate documentation;
- Death Certificates;
- Diplomas;
- Divorce Decrees;
- IRS Letters;
- Marriage Licenses;
- Powers of Attorney;
- Recordable (corporate) document(s);
- Single Status Affidavits;
- Transcripts; and
- Travel Consent Letters;

COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

The Key Role of Competent Authorities

Pursuant to Article 6 of the Apostille Convention, each Contracting State is required to designate one or more authorities that are competent to issue Apostilles (“**Competent Authorities**”). Each State is free to determine the identity and number of Competent Authorities they designate. Generally, this authority rests with the Secretary of States’ office, although there are exceptions.

Competent Authorities are the backbone of the sound operation of the Apostille Convention. They perform three fundamental functions under the Convention:

- *verifying* the authenticity (origin) of public document(s);

- *issuing* Apostilles and;
- *recording* each Apostille issued in a register in order to be able to verify, at the request of a recipient, the origin of an Apostille supposedly issued by that Competent Authority.

The sound operation of the Apostille Convention is dependent on the diligent, effective and proper performance of these functions.

The Functioning of Competent Authorities

In carrying out their functions under the Apostille Convention, Competent Authorities perform a number of separate but related tasks, including:

- receiving requests for Apostilles;

- verifying the origin of each document(s) for which an Apostille is to be issued, including any necessary follow-up with officials and authorities that issue public document(s);
- filling in each Apostille to be issued;
- attaching each completed Apostille to the underlying public document(s);
- recording the particulars of each Apostille issued in

the register of Apostilles; and

- verifying the origin of Apostilles at the request of a recipient.

For Competent Authorities that charge a fee for issuing Apostilles, another task may include handling payments.

PART 2

HAGUE COUNTRIES AND NON-HAGUE COUNTRIES

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HAGUE CONVENTION

In 1961, many countries all over the world joined in a treaty that simplified the authentication of public document(s) to be used abroad. That treaty is called The Hague Convention of 5 October 1961. It is commonly known as the Apostille Convention. The Treaty reduces the authentication process to a single formality: the issuance of an authentication certificate by an Authority designated by the country where

the public document(s) was issued. That Certificate is called an Apostille.

The website of the HCCH, Apostille Section 5, provides a concise overview (“Outline”) of the Apostille Convention, including:

Purpose:


- Who may issue an Apostille?
- How to verify the origin of an Apostille;
- The effects of an Apostille;
- Monitoring of the Convention; and
- The electronic Apostille program (e-App.)

See <https://assets.hcch.net/upload/outline12e.pdf> to view the outline.










LIST OF HAGUE COUNTRIES

As of July 2021, 120 states are contracting states of the Apostille Convention. They include 78 of the 88 member states of the HCCH in addition to 42 other states.

The convention is in force between all contracting states unless an existing party objects to the accession of a new state. In that case the convention enters into force for the new state, except between the new state and the objecting state(s).

STATE PARTY	ENTERED INTO FORCE
 Albania	9 May 2004

 Andorra	31 December 1996
 Antigua and Barbuda	1 November 1981
 Argentina	18 February 1988
 Armenia	14 August 1994
 Australia	16 March 1995
 Austria	13 January 1968
 Azerbaijan	2 March 2005
 Bahamas	10 July 1973
 Bahrain	31 December 2013
 Barbados	30 November 1966

 Belarus	31 May 1992
 Belgium	9 February 1976
 Belize	11 April 1993
 Bolivia	7 May 2018
 Bosnia and Herzegovina	6 March 1992
 Botswana	30 September 1966
 Brazil	14 August 2016
 Brunei	3 December 1987
 Bulgaria	29 April 2001

 Burundi	13 February 2015
 Cape Verde	13 February 2010
 Chile	30 August 2016
 China	—
 Colombia	30 January 2001
 Cook Islands	30 April 2005
 Costa Rica	14 December 2011
 Croatia	8 October 1991
 Cyprus	30 April 1973
 Czech Republic	16 March 1999

 Denmark	29 December 2006
 Dominica	3 November 1978
 Dominican Republic	30 August 2009
 Ecuador	2 April 2005
 El Salvador	31 May 1996
 Estonia	30 September 2001
 Eswatini	6 September 1968
 Fiji	10 October 1970
 Finland	26 August 1985
 France	24 January 1965

 Georgia	14 May 2007
 Germany	13 February 1966
 Greece	18 May 1985
 Grenada	7 April 2002
 Guatemala	18 September 2017
 Guyana	18 April 2019
 Honduras	30 September 2004
 Hungary	18 January 1973
 Iceland	27 November 2004
 India	14 July 2005

 Ireland	9 March 1999
 Israel	14 August 1978
 Italy	11 February 1978
 Jamaica	3 July 2021
 Japan	27 July 1970
 Kazakhstan	30 January 2001
 Kosovo	14 July 2016
 Kyrgyzstan	31 July 2011
 Latvia	30 January 1996
 Lesotho	4 October 1966

 Liberia	8 February 1996
 Liechtenstein	17 September 1972
 Lithuania	19 July 1997
 Luxembourg	3 June 1979
 Malawi	2 December 1967
 Malta	3 March 1968
 Marshall Islands	14 August 1992
 Mauritius	12 March 1968
 Mexico	14 August 1995
 Moldova	16 March 2007


 Monaco	31 December 2002
 Mongolia	31 December 2009
 Montenegro	3 June 2006
 Morocco	14 August 2016
 Namibia	30 January 2001
 Netherlands	8 October 1965
 New Zealand	22 November 2001
 Nicaragua	14 May 2013
 Niue	2 March 1999
 North Macedonia	17 November 1991

 Norway	29 July 1983
 Oman	30 January 2012
 Palau	23 June 2020
 Panama	4 August 1991
 Paraguay	30 August 2014
 Peru	30 September 2010
 Philippines	14 May 2019
 Poland	14 August 2005
 Portugal	4 February 1969
 Romania	16 March 2001

 Russia	31 May 1992
 Saint Kitts and Nevis	14 December 1994
 Saint Lucia	31 July 2002
 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	27 October 1979
 Samoa	13 September 1999
 San Marino	13 February 1995
 São Tomé and Príncipe	13 September 2008
 Serbia	27 April 1992
 Seychelles	31 March 1979

 Singapore	<i>16 September 2021</i>
 Slovakia	18 February 2002
 Slovenia	25 June 1991
 South Africa	30 April 1995
 South Korea	14 July 2007
 Spain	25 September 1978
 Suriname	25 November 1975
 Sweden	1 May 1999
 Switzerland	11 March 1973
 Tajikistan	31 October 2015

 Tonga	4 June 1970
 Trinidad and Tobago	14 July 2000
 Tunisia	30 March 2018
 Turkey	29 September 1985
 Ukraine	22 December 2003
 United Kingdom	24 January 1965
 United States	15 October 1981
 Uruguay	14 October 2012
 Uzbekistan	15 April 2012
 Vanuatu	30 July 1980

 Venezuela	16 March 1999
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PART 3

PROCESS FOR HAGUE COUNTRIES

When you are requesting an apostille for a document(s) going to be used in a Hague Country, in almost all instances it is a **one**-step process...the document(s) goes to the Secretary of State in the state where the document(s) originated.

You will need to know the correct Secretary of State to which to send the document(s). You will need the correct order form, the correct amount of money for filing fees, who to make the check payable to, and the correct return label.

Here is a list of **Intake** Questions when interviewing a new client:

1. Name.

2. State of Residency.
3. What type of document(s) do you need to Apostille or Legalize? If you are dealing with embassy legalization, see the following Chapter.
4. What is your timeline for the completion of these documents?
5. What is the originating state of your document(s)?
6. What is the country of destination where you will be using your document(s)?
7. Have the document(s) already been notarized?

Note to Apostille Agent: If the document(s) have already been notarized, have the correct acknowledgments been attached?

Here is a sample intake form. You should make any changes to suit your individual business needs.



Center City Notary & Apostille Co., Ltd.
100 South Broad Street, Suite 1415
Philadelphia, PA 19110-1005
Phone: 215-870-3103 - Toll Free: 800-604-3248
Email: centercitynotary100@gmail.com
Website: centercitynotary.com

(This is a sample of the Intake Form I use. It is being provided as an example, I am not recommending that you use it in its entirety, and you will need to replace my company with your own.)

Instructions:

Please send:

1. Documents requiring Apostille and/or Authentication
2. Payment: Check, money order or credit card information (see below)
3. This form
4. Prepaid return envelope or federal express account number: _____

Contact Information

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____
Street Address: _____ Suite/Apt. _____
Country: USA City: Phila State: PA Zip Code: _____
Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Document Information:

Destination Country: _____ Total # of documents: _____ Quote: _____
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Payment Information:

Check Visa Master Card AmEx Money Order

Credit Card Information

Card Number: _____ Expiration: _____ Security Code: _____
Name Appearing on Card: _____
Billing Address: _____
Country: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

This signature will authorize Center City Notary & Apostille Co., Ltd. ("CCNA") to obtain Apostilles or Authentications on my behalf. I agree to indemnify and hold CCNA and/or its agents and employees harmless from any liability, including attorney's fees, that may be incurred herein. CCNA cannot guaranty shipping and/or delivery times. CCNA can further not guaranty anything occurring as a result of force majeure. You have been instructed not to purchase travel tickets or anything else until the Apostilles or Authentications have been received.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

- Is there a seal or stamp of the public office – or is one required

5. Your Responsibility in Proofing Documents Before Submitting Them

Many documents that originate in other countries have notarial language that is not compliant with laws in the United States. Check the document to make sure the notary has not attested to details beyond the scope of their authority in the state where the Apostille will be issued before submitting it.

Some states may have limitations on how old a document can be – be sure to check that out before sending documents that were certified or notarized many years ago. [This limitation generally applies to public records such as birth, death, or marriage records. Some states did not

keep exemplars of county officials beyond a certain date, so “original” birth, death, and marriage records may have to be replaced with new certified copies before they can be submitted for certification.]

6. Make sure you have obtained county certification if required.

A County Certification is a certificate which authenticates that the Official who signed the document(s) is in good standing. This must be obtained from the county clerk’s office where the document(s) originated. Some territories, such as Puerto Rico, require a County Certification.

7. Make sure that you use the proper SOS ordering form.

Secretaries of State are doing this differently these days. Some of them, such as New Jersey, are offering online

- Does the notarial certificate properly indicate the name of the signer and the capacity in which the document was signed?
- Has the notary signed the certificate?
- Has the notary affixed the stamp or seal (if required)?
- Is the stamp or seal compliant with that state's laws?
- Is the stamp or seal legible?
- Has the notary simply "signed and stamped" without completing a full notarial certificate?
- Does the notarial certificate have the venue entered?
- Is the venue on the notarial certificate consistent with the jurisdiction of the notary?
- Is there a date on the notarial certificate?
- Is the date on or after the date the document was signed?
- Is the date of the notarization before the notary's expiration date? [Note: Documents may be certified after the notary's commission has expired as long as the notarization was done before the expiration date.]
- Is the notarial certificate appropriate to the intent of the transaction? [For example – if your customer needs to submit a copy of their driver's license and the notarial certificate on the copy is for an acknowledgement – that would be rejected by most states.]
- Is there a "wet signature" of an appropriate public official?

programs. In New Jersey you login and pay for your job. You immediately receive an email receipt. You then take that receipt and send it, together with your document(s) and a return label. Delaware has an upload system, and you can upload your document(s) with your request for Apostille, give them your FedEx account number and get your completed Apostilles returned in the mail.

The majority of states accept apostille requests by mail. Here is a link to the site for every Secretary of State

<https://www.allaboutapostilles.com/resources>

Most of these order forms include the address to which the document(s) need to be sent and the proper fees.

Below is a sample form used to Order Apostilles in Pennsylvania. Remember, each state has their own order form, and you need to be sure to use the correct one. You simply fill out the form and use it to forward your package to the specific SOS. Here is a link to order forms for each Secretary of State.

<https://www.allaboutapostille.com/resources>



Department of State
Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation
Room 210 North Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0029
(717) 787-5280
www.dos.state.pa.us

Request for legalization of documents

The fee is \$15.00 per certificate issued. Please make all checks or money order payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Name of Requestor: Judith P. Lawrence
Firm/Organization (if applicable): Center City Notary
Address: 100 South Broad Street
Suite 1415
Philadelphia, PA 19110-1005

Phone Number: 215-870-3103

Country for which the documents are being prepared: Ukraine

Number of documents to be certified: 1

Payment is made by: Check or money order \$ 15.00 Check number _____

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of the documents. If you wish the documents to be returned by a courier service, you must enclose a pre-paid air bill with your order. Effective October 1, 2009, the Department no longer accepts FedEx or DHL for return shipment of documents.

Authentication requests are processed as quickly as possible. However, processing time may vary dependent upon the volume of work and the resources available. Please submit documents as soon as possible to allow sufficient time for completion. Requests are processed in the date order they are received.

The Secretary of the Commonwealth may only authenticate documents signed by and containing the official seal of the following Pennsylvania public officials:

- * State Officials
- * County Elected Officials
- * Judges and Magisterial District Judges
- * Pennsylvania Notaries Public

Documents MUST be submitted with original signatures and official seals.

8. Make sure you have included a check or authorized the proper payment amount of the SOS fees.

It is important that you calculate your Apostille fees correctly. If you send or authorize an incorrect amount your job will be rejected and returned to you which will cost you time and money. The return label you sent with your Apostille request will be used to return the rejected job to you and you will need to pay shipping costs to resubmit your Apostille request.

9. Make sure your return label and envelope is provided if required.

Some SOS offices accept FedEx and UPS labels but many SOS offices will not. In the case of Pennsylvania, they accept requests via FedEx but are unwilling to return a completed job by any carrier other than UPS. So, it is important that

you check (this info is usually on the Internet) to make sure you are using the right carrier for the specific state you are working with.

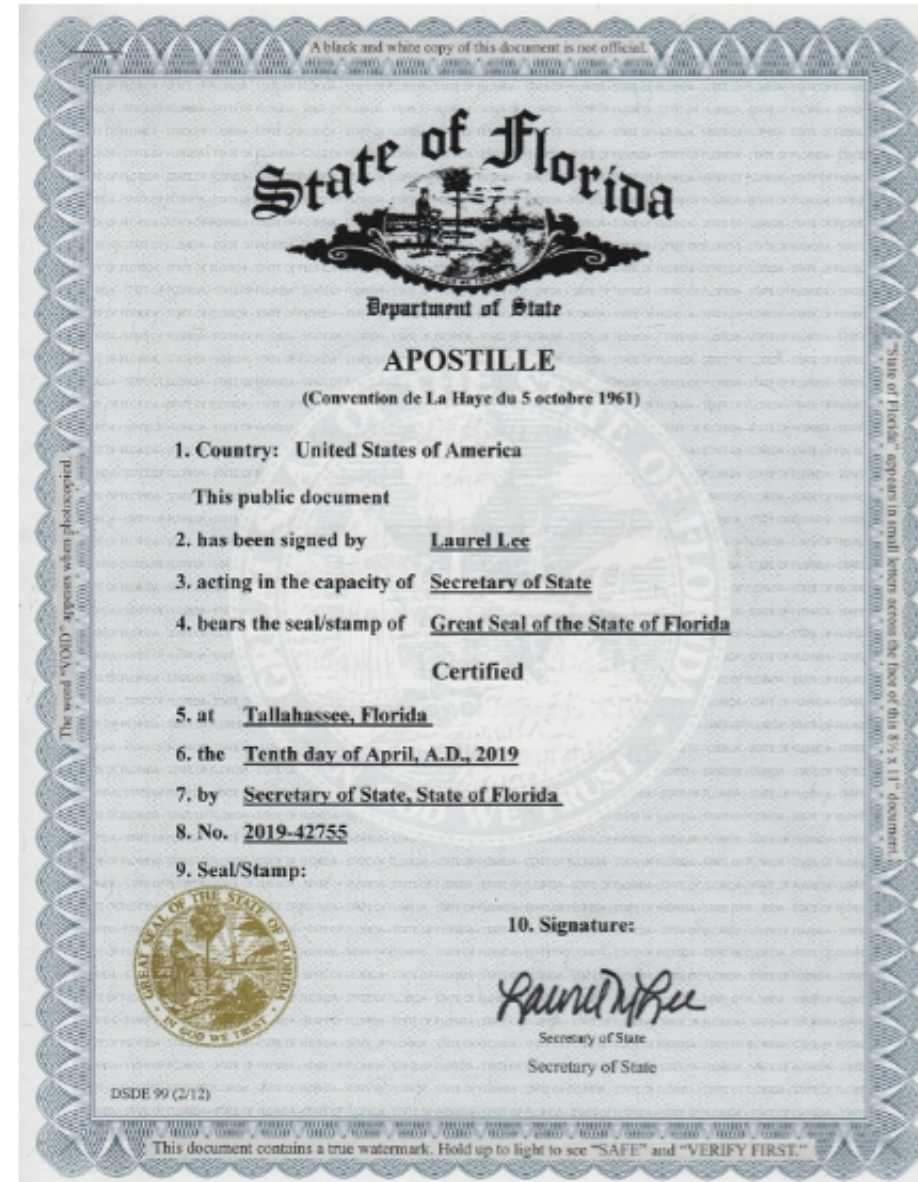
NOTES TO APOSTILLE AGENT:


Remember; federal document(s) cannot be notarized and need to go directly to the Department of State.

For most document(s), they will be sent to the SOS of the state where the document(s) originated. For document(s) that need notarization, the state where they are notarized becomes the state of origination.








STATE OF ALABAMA
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

APOSTILLE
(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)

1. Country: *United States of America*
This public document

2. has been signed by *[Redacted]*

3. acting in the capacity of *Notary Public*

4. bears the seal/stamp of *[Redacted]*
State of Alabama

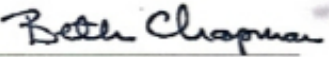
CERTIFIED


5. at *Montgomery, Alabama*

6. the *18TH* day of *June 2007*

7. by *Secretary of State, State of Alabama* 8. No. *2007- [Redacted]*

9. Seal/Stamp

10. Signature:

Beth Chapman
Beth Chapman Secretary of State



PART 4

PROCESS FOR NON-HAGUE COUNTRIES

Many states have adopted a form of “universal” certificate that can be used as either an Apostille or an Authentication for countries that are not members of the Hague Convention. (See Part 3) If you receive these forms attached to documents you have submitted, be aware that they still must be submitted to the U.S. Department of State and/or an embassy or consulate for further certification.

As you learned in Part 3, when you are requesting an apostille for a document(s) to be used in a Hague Country, in almost all instances it is **one-step** process... the document(s)

goes to the Secretary of State of the state where the document(s) originated.

However, when you are requesting an apostille for a document(s) to be used in a Non-Hague country, it is what we refer to as a **three-step** process:

1. First, the document(s) need to be authenticated at the state level.

a. (See part 3)

2. Second, the document(s) needs to be authenticated by the US Department of State (See below, Steps for Obtaining an Apostille for a Non-Hague Country); and

a. **Make sure you have all the document(s).**

Check and recheck to make sure your package includes all of the document(s) being legalized. **If** you order four

(4) authentications but only send three (3) document(s), your entire job will be rejected.

- b. **Make sure all translations include a Certificate of Authenticity unless the translation is part of the document(s).**

Make sure that a Certificate of Authenticity is attached to your translations. This means that the translator is certified by either the American Translator's Association or the National Association of Translators and Interpreters. Most Secretaries of State will not accept a translation without the Certificate of Authenticity.

- c. **Make sure you have notarized and initialed every document(s) in all places required.**

Be sure that you have notarized and/or initialed all document(s) in all places required. Note, if your document(s)

are in a foreign language, **Notarial Certificates must be in English.** There are no exceptions to this rule.

- d. **Make sure you have used proper a Acknowledgement if required.**

Make sure you have used your state's approved notarial certificate if required.

- e. **Make sure you have the county certification if required.**

A County Certification is a certificate which authenticates that the Official who signed the document(s) is in good standing. This must be obtained from the county clerk's office where the document(s) originated. Some territories, such as Puerto Rico, require a County Certification.

- f. **Make sure you have used the proper order form.**

(4) authentications but only send three (3) document(s), your entire job will be rejected.

- b. **Make sure all translations include a Certificate of Authenticity unless the translation is part of the document(s).**

Make sure that a Certificate of Authenticity is attached to your translations. This means that the translator is certified by either the American Translator's Association or the National Association of Translators and Interpreters. Most Secretaries of State will not accept a translation without the Certificate of Authenticity.

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are in a foreign language, **Notarial Certificates must be in English.** There are no exceptions to this rule.

- d. **Make sure you have used proper a Acknowledgement if required.**

Make sure you have used your state's approved notarial certificate if required.

- e. **Make sure you have the county certification if required.**

A County Certification is a certificate which authenticates that the Official who signed the document(s) is in good standing. This must be obtained from the county clerk's office where the document(s) originated. Some territories, such as Puerto Rico, require a County Certification.

- f. **Make sure you have used the proper order form.**

Here is a link to every Secretary of State order form throughout the United States.

<https://www.allaboutapostilles.com/resources>

- g. **Make sure you have included a check or authorized the properpayment of the SOS fees.**

It is important that you calculate your Apostille fees correctly. If you send or authorize an incorrect amount your job will be rejected and returned to you which will cost you time and money. The return label you sent with your Apostille request will be used to return the rejected job to you and you will need to pay shipping costs to resubmit your Apostille request.

- h. **Make sure your return label and envelope is provided if required.**

Whether it is domestic or international shipping, UPS continues to be an authorized federal government shipping provider for the US Government.

As of July 2021, the cost of each document(s) is \$20.00. They accept US Postal Money Orders, Checks (personal, corporate, certified, cashier's and traveler's) payable to "U.S. Department of State".

3. Third, the document(s) may need Embassy Legalization. This is when the document(s) is presented to the Embassy of the country where the document(s) will be used. If this is the method you are using, you need to explain this to your client and be clear that this will be more expensive and take more time.

Presentation of Document(s) to Embassies for Embassy Legalization:

Embassies have different specifications for legalization. You will need to research the Embassy to which you are sending your document(s). Here is an example for the Chinese Embassy:

- i. Make sure your document(s) is notarized by a local notary public unless it is an original copy/certification issued by a competent Federal/State/ local office.
- j. The document(s) must then be authenticated by the Secretary of the State from where it originated. Some states require that the document(s) be certified by the County Clerk first.
- k. If one of the Chinese Consulate-Generals holds consular jurisdiction over your state, you may submit your document(s) to that Consulate-

General for final legalization; if not, please get your document(s) authenticated by the U.S. State Department before the Chinese Embassy can provide final legalization. (Please note that your legalization application may be rejected by the Embassy/Consulate General that does not hold consular jurisdiction over the state where your document(s) is executed.)

- l. One duly completed and signed [Authentication Application Form](#). – (G1 Form) **Form must be typed in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. (no handwritten applications will be accepted).**
- m. Photo ID (Drivers License/ Passport) of individual signing G1 Form.

- n. The document(s) to be authenticated, submit both the original and a complete set of photocopy.
- o. Washington Express [Document\(s\) Processing Request Form](#).
- p. Other supporting document(s) a consular officer may request.

Note: Single affidavits/certificates intended to be used for marriage registration in China and certain adoption document(s) regarding marital status, health status, or criminal records are only valid for six months from the date of issuance. The Embassy / Consulate-Generals will NOT authenticate a document(s) if it becomes invalid.

You may want to get assistance from a Facilitator.. They can help you with fees, translation requirements and where to send the document(s).

Judi will now share with you why NOT Paying Attention to Directions can turn into an expensive mistake.

“A few years ago, when I was newer in this business, I was asked to obtain authentications for documents destined for Egypt. Egypt is a non-Hague Country and as I explained above, that means the document(s) must go through a 3-step process; state authentication, legalization and then, if the client asks, they can be presented to the Embassy which, in this case, was what the client requested. That takes longer than a state authentication. The document(s) went to the state, then we sent them to the Department of State and then the Embassy requested that we send two (2) cashier’s checks, each in the amount of \$25.00. I did not pay careful enough attention to what was being requested and I sent two money orders, each in the amount of \$25.00. Because I was not careful, the job was rejected. The return label was sent back

to me with the job. I had to go to the bank and change the money orders to cashier's checks and then I had to reship and send another return label. Worse than that, my client had to leave the country and since it was going to take so long, and it was my error, I had to pay to ship the completed document(s)

to Egypt. This all could have been avoided if I had read it slowly and paid more attention to the embassy's request.”

Here is a sample of what a document looks like when Embassy Legalization has been completed.



NOTES TO APOSTILLE AGENT:

1. Remember; federal document(s) cannot be notarized and go directly to the Department of State.

For most document(s), they will be sent to the SOS of the state where the document(s) originated. For document(s) that need notarization, the state where they are notarized becomes the state of origination.

If you are sending this yourself, the Department of State always requires an additional copy of all documentation.



PART 5

TYPES OF DOCUMENT(S)

OFTEN REQUIRING AN APOSTILLE

NOTE: Some of the document(s) we will refer to herein are VITAL STATISTICS DOCUMENT(S). Take careful note of the processes. Be especially careful if the document(s) is over five (5) years old and make sure that the SOS of the State of Origination will accept the document(s) for Apostille.

1. Birth Certificates

Birth certificates represent one of the most frequent requests for an apostille. Two important things to remember:

- First, you can never use a copy certification on this document(s).
- Second, no Secretary of State will Apostille a copy of a Birth Certificate. It must be signed by a Court Registrar - not an M.D., a Deputy Clerk or a Clerk of any other kind - only a Court registrar.

If your client needs to order a new Birth Certificate, you should direct them to www.Vitalcheck.com. You cannot do this on their behalf because they are required to furnish a valid governmental ID and the document(s) will only be mailed to address on that ID.

Once your client has the document(s) you will send it to the Secretary of State in which it originated - meaning if you are physically located in Ohio and so is your client, but the Birth

Certificate was issued in Florida, you will need to send it to the Florida Secretary of State. There are no exceptions.

2. Death Certificates

A death certificate must be an original copy. No Secretary of State will Apostille a photocopy of a Death Certificate.

- First, you can never use a copy certification on this document(s). Second, no Secretary of State will Apostille a copy of a Death Certificate. It must be signed by a Registrar - not a Deputy Clerk or an M.D. or any other person.

If your client needs to order a new Death Certificate, there are two options;

1. Direct your client to www.Vitalcheck.com. You cannot do this for them because they are required to furnish a valid governmental ID and the

document(s) will only be mailed to the address on the ID.

2. If you want to request copies of the death certificate yourself, you need to contact the state or local health department in the state or county where the person died and request certified copies directly. We've put together a list of the information you'll need in order to obtain a death certificate in your state, including qualifications, cost, required information, where to submit your application, and a link to the application you'll need to fill out. Click your state's link below for all the information you'll need to order a death certificate.

Once you have the document(s), you will send it to the Secretary of State in which it originated - meaning if you are

physically located in Ohio and so is your client, but the Death Certificate was issued in Florida, you need to send it to the Florida Secretary of State. There are no exceptions.

LINKS TO STATE VITAL RECORD DEPARTMENTS

STATE	LINK
Alabama	https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/vitalrecords/
Alaska	https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/vitalstats/pages/default.aspx
Arizona	https://www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php

Arkansas	https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/program/certificates-and-records
California	https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/pages/vital-records.aspx
Colorado	https://cdphe.colorado.gov/vitalrecords
Connecticut	https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Vital-Records/State-Vital-Records-Office--Home
Delaware	https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/ss/vitalstats.html
District of Columbia	https://dchealth.dc.gov/vital-records

(Washington, D.C.)	
Florida	http://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates/certificates/
Georgia	https://dph.georgia.gov/VitalRecords
Hawaii	https://health.hawaii.gov/vitalrecords/
Idaho	https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/birth-marriage-death-records
Illinois	https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/birth-death-other-records.html
Indiana	https://www.in.gov/health/vital-records/

Iowa	https://idph.iowa.gov/health-statistics/vital-records
Kansas	https://www.kdheks.gov/vital/
Kentucky	https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/vsb/Pages/default.aspx
Louisiana	https://ldh.la.gov/vitalrecords
Maine	https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/data-research/vital-records/order/index.shtml
Maryland	https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Pages/Home.aspx
Massachusetts	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/registry-of-

	vital-records-and-statistics
Michigan	https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_4645---,00.html
Minnesota	https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/index.html
Mississippi	https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/31,0,109.html
Missouri	https://health.mo.gov/data/vitalrecords/
Montana	https://dphhs.mt.gov/vitalrecords/
Nebraska	https://dhhs.ne.gov/pages/vital-records.aspx

Nevada	https://dpbh.nv.gov/Programs/BirthDeath/Birth_and_Death_Vital_Records_-_Home/
New Hampshire	https://sos.nh.gov/archives-vital-records-records-management/vital-records-information/vital-records-administration/
New Jersey	https://www.state.nj.us/health/vital/
New Mexico	https://www.nmhealth.org/about/erd/bvrhs/vrp/
New York	https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/
New York City	https://www1.nyc.gov/site/records/historical-records/order.page

N. Carolina	https://vitalrecords.nc.gov/
N. Dakota	https://www.health.nd.gov/vital
Ohio	https://odh.ohio.gov/vs
Oklahoma	https://oklahoma.gov/health/birth-and-death-certificates.html
Oregon	https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/GETVITALRECORDS
Pennsylvania	https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/certificates/Pages/Vital%20Records.aspx
Rhode Island	https://health.ri.gov/records/
S. Carolina	https://scdhec.gov/vital-records

S. Dakota	https://doh.sd.gov/records/
Tennessee	https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/vital-records.html
Texas	https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vs/default.aspx
Utah	https://vitalrecords.health.utah.gov/
Vermont	https://www.healthvermont.gov/stats/vital-records
Virginia	https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/
Washington	https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/

	VitalRecords
West Virginia	https://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc/vital/birthcert.asp
Wisconsin	https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/vitalrecords/index.htm
Wyoming	https://health.wyo.gov/admin/vitalstatistics/

3. Marriage Licenses and Divorce Decrees

These document(s) have a commonality - if the Marriage License or the Divorce Decree is signed by ANYONE other than the actual **Clerk of the Court** (that includes a Deputy Clerk) then your client will have to go to City Hall and request an **EXEMPLIFIED COPY** of the document(s). An exemplified copy is an official copy or transcript of a public instrument, made under the seal and original pen-in-hand signature of a court or public functionary and in the name of the sovereign state, for example "The People of the State of Oklahoma". Exemplified copies are more than certified copies – the clerk certified that the copies are genuine and the judge certifies that the clerk has the authority to say they are genuine.

The County Clerk will look up the document(s) and stamp it as to its validity. Costs vary from state-to-state. Once you have the exemplified copy, you can send it to the Secretary

of State in which the document(s) originated. Explanation: if you are located in California and so is your client, but the marriage or divorce took place in Texas, you will need to get these document(s) Apostilled in Texas.

IMPORTANT: ONLY A PARTY TO THE MARRIAGE AND/OR DIVORCE CAN REQUEST AN EXEMPLIFIED COPY. YOU CANNOT OBTAIN IT ON THEIR BEHALF.

ALSO IMPORTANT: Notaries cannot use a Copy Certification on either of these document(s).

4. Copy Certifications

A Copy Certification is a photocopy of a primary document(s) that contains an endorsement that it is a true and correct copy and has not been changed or altered in any way. It does not give weight to the document(s) or certify that the

document(s) is genuine, only that it is a true copy of the original document(s).

It is important to note that you cannot use Copy Certification on Vital Statistics document(s) including Birth Certificates, Death Certificates, Marriage Licenses or Divorce Decrees. Many states will allow notaries to make Certified Copies, but others, including Alabama, California*, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina and Tennessee do not.

Below is a sample of a Pennsylvania Copy Certification. Be sure to check your state guidelines and use the proper certification for the state applicable to the transaction you are working on.

*Unlike notaries in many other states and countries, California notaries are not allowed to certify a copy of

anything except a Power of Attorney. Even if a California Notary makes the copy personally, they cannot certify it. However, a California Notary may notarize a statement by the document(s) holder stating that the copy is a true, complete and correct copy of the original document(s) in their possession. This is called "Copy Certification by Document(s) Custodian" and is acceptable for Apostille by the CA SOS.

5. Powers of Attorney

What Is a Power of Attorney? A power of attorney (POA) is a legal document(s) giving one person (the agent or attorney in fact) the power to act for another person (the principal). This agent can have broad legal or limited authority to make decisions about the principal's property, finances, or medical care. The document(s) is used in the event of a principal's illness or disability, or when the principal can't be present

to sign necessary document(s) for financial transactions. A power of attorney can end for a number of reasons, such as when the principal dies, the principal revokes it, a court invalidates it, the principal divorces their spouse, who happens to be the agent, or the agent can no longer carry out the outlined responsibilities.

Powers of Attorney might be the most sensitive and important document(s) you will be asked to Apostille for several important reasons. First, the document(s) can change someone's life. That said, sometimes when you Apostille a Power of Attorney the principal has peace of mind that it is done and then puts it away for an extended period of time until needed. If it was done incorrectly, when it is time to use it there can be a multitude of problems.

Second, you must be very careful not to commit the unauthorized practice of law. Clients will often ask, “does

this document(s) look good” and your response should be “I am an Apostille Agent, not an attorney - if you have any questions about the document(s), I suggest you contact a licensed attorney. Remember, that if years later anyone contests these document(s), the client may say, “but the Apostille Agent said they were good document(s)”, and you could be held liable.

Third, your client has spent a considerable amount of time and money to Apostille the document(s) and send it to a foreign country. The last thing you want is to have a problem because it was processed incorrectly and it might need to be redone *at your expense*.

When processing Apostilles for Powers of Attorney of any kind, it's important to make sure the document(s) has been executed properly, has been notarized with state mandated notary certificate language and that you haven't given any

advice to the principal or the agent regarding the specifics of the Power of Attorney. Something I do when encountering POA's is to always ask the client if the document(s) was prepared by an attorney or equivalent or if it was self-prepared. If the document(s) was self-prepared, it is good practice to recommend that the document(s) be reviewed by an attorney before proceeding with obtaining the Apostille. If the client does not have an attorney, have a list of attorneys and/or legal aid societies that you can recommend.

6. Translation

It is important that you discuss with your client what needs to be translated and whether the original or the translated version will be presented for Apostille.

Make sure that a Certificate of Authenticity is attached to your translations. This means that the translator is certified

by either the American Translator's Association or the National Association of Translators and Interpreters. Most Secretaries of State will not accept a translation without the Certificate of Authenticity.

7. Federal Background Checks

A federal background check can only be Apostilled at the Department of State in Washington, DC. Here is a link with a list of FBI Approved Channelers from which your client can order his or her federal background check.

<https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/identity-history-summary-checks/list-of-fbi-approved-channelers-for-departmental-order-submissions>

You should advise your client to forward the email they receive from the FBI Channeler which will be in PDF format.

You can then download that to your computer and forward it to the DOS.

Important Note: You should advise your client that when ordering a Federal Background Check, they will have two options: paper copies or electronic copies. If they select the electronic copy, they can email it directly to you and it must be exactly what they received, not a scanned version or a photocopy. If they opted for the paper copy, they need to deliver it directly to you.

Now, you have two choices:

You can request an Apostille by Mail directly from the Federal Authentication Office:

In order to request legalization or Apostille services, you will need to use Form DS 4194. Errors on this form are the most common reason for rejection. The total cost is \$20.00 per

document, for all services, including rejections. You can send this to:

Office of Authentications
US Department of State
CA/PPT/S/TO/AUT
Sterling, VA. 20166

-OR-

You can use a Facilitator to Assist You

In our experience, using a facilitator can help you coordinate your transactions. For a small fee, the facilitator processes the document(s) with the Department of State and obtains the apostille. They will pick them up when they are completed and return them to you or your client directly. If you are doing a federal background check(s) in volume, this is a good route. They will track everything for you and

make sure everything is completed on time and is correctly processed.

We recommend two companies. We have no financial or other interests in these companies.

US Authentications

Address 7015 Old Keene Mill Rd #203, Springfield, VA 22150

Phone [\(703\) 971-7226](tel:(703)971-7226)

Link <https://www.usauthentication.com/index.php>

Elite Document(s)

8135 McCauley Way #2106

Lorton, VA 22079

703-901-6773

8. State Background Checks

State-level background checks **reveal criminal charges and convictions that are brought against an individual at the state level**, including police and law enforcement reports. This includes misdemeanor and felony convictions, as well as pending cases.

When asked to obtain an Apostille for a State Background Check, you can often order the Background Check through the state police department of the particular state in which you need it. For example, Pennsylvania has a program called “PATCH” which is where you can apply for the background check. Here are some additional sites which you may want to check out:

- Best choice for background checks overall - Truthfinder

- Best choice for social media reports - Instant Checkmate
- Best background check for fast searches - Infotracer
- Best background check for first timers - BeenVerified
- Best choice for basic background checks - PeopleFinders
- Best background check for budget-conscious users - Spokeo

A State Background check must be notarized and needs the appropriate acknowledgment. You then need to send it to the Secretary of State in which it was issued.

9. Police/Important/Sheriff Criminal Background Checks

Police Criminal Background Checks are official document(s) which verify by a law enforcement agency the recorded

criminal, non-criminal record of a person. Usually, these document(s) can be Apostillised at the state level. It is always best practice to have your client contact the law enforcement agency to coordinate an appointment to obtain the background check from them which then must be notarized. Often there is no notary on staff and you and your client will need to arrange to bring a notary to the appointment. This should not be confused with FBI Background Checks or State Background Checks.

10. Diplomas

A Diploma is a certificate awarded by an educational institution to show that someone has successfully completed a course of study.

Important things to Remember:

- First, if your state will allow you to use a copy certification on a Diploma you may do so but the document will require a notarization. If there is not a notarization it will be rejected.
- If your client needs to order a new Diploma, it is best practice that they do it themselves.
 - a. a written, printed, or typed copy (*especially* a typed copy!) of dictated or recorded material; or
 - b. an official or legal and often published copy - *especially* an official copy of a student's educational record.

You will send the Diploma to the Secretary of State in which it originated - meaning if you are physically located in Ohio and your client is as well, but the Diploma was issued in Pennsylvania, you need to send it to the Pennsylvania Secretary of State.

11. Transcripts

Definition of *Transcript*

If your client needs to get an apostille for his or her transcript, only he or she can request it. The school institution will supply a notarized copy of the transcript. We are not aware of any exception to this rule. Once this is done, at the client's request, the school can send the notarized transcript to you. You will then send it to the Secretary of State where the transcript originated.

12. Recordable Business Documents

A recordable document(s) is a document(s) which has been filed on the corporate website of a specific state. A Certificate of Incorporation and a Certificate of Good Standing are two examples of this type of document(s).

These document(s) are obtained for Apostille differently than a Power of Attorney which has been signed and notarized by a Notary Public. In some states the Secretaries of State's offices take care of everything for you (i.e., Delaware) but in some states it is more complicated. In certain states, these document(s) need to be downloaded from the state corporate website. Once you purchase the certified copies, they will be emailed to you with a file number and those document(s) can then be submitted to the Secretary of State for Apostille.

If a client comes in with photocopies of the document(s), it is a waste of your time and your client's money to send

the document(s) to the SOS because you must purchase the copies of the document(s) from the SOS where the document(s) were filed.


You must check the SOS guidelines for the requirements of each specific state.

Note to Apostille Agent: You can pass these costs along to your client. You must check your SOS Guidelines for the specific requirements of each state.

13. Record of Vaccination (COVID)

This is the record of Vaccination for the Covid 19 Pandemic.

I have had several requests to Apostille this Record of Vaccination. If you are a Notary Public and If your state allows you to use a copy certification, you can certify the copy and then send it to the Secretary of State in which the document(s) originated.

COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card 

Please keep this record card, which includes medical information about the vaccines you have received.
 Por favor, guarde esta tarjeta de registro, que incluye información médica sobre las vacunas que ha recibido.

Last Name: [REDACTED] First Name: [REDACTED] MI: [REDACTED]

Date of birth: [REDACTED] Patient number (medical record or IIS record number): [REDACTED]

Vaccine	Product Name/Manufacturer Lot Number	Date	Healthcare Professional or Clinic Site
1 st Dose COVID-19	Moderna 030A2.02	3/5/21 mm dd yy	Medical Tower R
2 nd Dose COVID-19	Moderna 021B21A	4/2/21 mm dd yy	Medical Tower
Other		mm dd yy	
Other		mm dd yy	

PART 6

UNRESTRICTED FEES!!!

DID YOU KNOW THAT THIS IS AN UNRESTRICTED FEE BUSINESS?

Unlike notarial services in most states, being an Apostille Agent is what we call an “unrestricted fee” revenue stream. Whereas most states in the US have set specific statutes on what notaries may charge for their services, including travel fees, administrative fees, etc., with document authentication work, you are free to set your own fees for everything you do up to obtaining the Apostille itself. That includes any travel fees to pick up the document(s) being Apostilled, print fees if the client would like you to print the document(s)

for them, shipping costs to send the document(s) to competent authorities, shipping fees to send document(s) back to the client, research time when determining the procedure for a particular consulate or embassy, any facilitator fees you paid to other Apostille agents in other states, and many, many other opportunities. Take a look at the case study below for an example.

Here is an example from Judi:

One Friday morning I received a call from Ted. Ted’s daughter, Julie, was in Sarasota, FL participating in a rowing event. She needed to sign an important document(s) which needed to be notarized, Apostilled and in Italy by the following Friday at the latest. Waiting until Julie was back in PA would have sufficed if the SOS offices in PA had been opened because I could have sent an expediter and it would have been done and ready to FedEx to Italy. But, due to the

pandemic, that was a no fly. In another circumstance we might have used Remote Online Notarization, however there were just too many moving pieces to this transaction to consider it.

I called Michele Klempner, an expediter from Florida, and she agreed to help. Michelle said that if she had the document in her hands by Saturday before the FedEx deadline, she would get it to Tallahassee and it would be apostilled on Monday. She said she would overnight it back to me so I would have it on Tuesday. Ted agreed to pay for these expedited services.

Next, I located a notary in Sarasota, Florida to meet with Julie and notarize her document. Louise, the Sarasota notary, was logistically closer to the hotel where Julie was staying than Michelle.

I then knew I figured it all out but there were many moving

parts to this arrangement so I sent a confirming email to all parties.

The reason the document(s) needed to be Apostilled in Florida, even though Julie lives in Philadelphia, is because:

- Julie was physically in Florida at the time of the signing and notarization of the document;
- This makes the origination of the document(s) in Florida where the notarization took place; and
- The state requirement would then be to Apostille the document in Florida.

So, who earned money?

- Louise, the Sarasota Notary, got her fee for performing the notarization and travel time.
- The SOS got its fees.

- Michelle got her fees and was reimbursed for all costs.
- The Expediter in Florida got his fee.
- I got a fee for putting this plan into motion.

Most importantly, I have Ted as a customer for life.

LET'S TALK PRICING

Why is it so difficult... and why doesn't everyone charge the same prices? Here are some answers.

The best part of this business is that there are many opportunities to increase your revenue stream. Yes, you may only charge what the state mandates for notarization, and yes, you may only charge what the Secretary of State requires for the apostille but other than that, **there are no restrictions**. So, you can charge for getting the Apostille to and from to SOS, travel fees to meet with the client, telephone calls with clients, research time and any other fees you incur in obtaining the apostille.

Now, that is not to say you can charge whatever you want...

you need to keep yourself competitive and align with what the market will bear. Do your due diligence and find out what the guy around the corner charges and even what the woman in the next town over charges.

Then it is important that you take into consideration that the Apostille business is packed full of variables:

- One client may come to you and calmly tell you that he or she is doing this well in advance and there is plenty of time and to just call when the job is completed.
- Another client may come to you and frantically tell you that he or she needs their apostille yesterday and will beg you to do whatever you can to get it, but will they want to pay for it?

- A client may come to you with one document(s); another client may come to you with 10 document(s).
- One client will come to you and the document(s) will need to be notarized and another client will have all document(s) which do not need notarizations.

And so, each of these clients are a different scenario and the pricing will be different.

You also may be asked to do some research for a client, i.e., if they are looking for a lost document(s) or a document(s) that is quite old. You can charge for that time it took to do the research but again, be sure to keep it within what the market price is for that sort of service.

PART 7

STARTING YOUR APOSTILLE BUSINESS

To be successful in this business, it is important that you understand these fundamentals... Positivity, Patience and Persistence.

POSITIVITY

Damus Smith, in his book, says “In order to sell you must compel.” Judi and Matt say, “In order to sell and compel, you must have a positive attitude.”

Remember the person behind the counter who looks bored and angry versus the person across the aisle who is smiling

and wants to help you... which one gets the business? In today’s competitive world, positivity will increase your chances of success.

PATIENCE

The proverb “*patience is a virtue*” means that it is a good quality to be able to tolerate something that takes a long time. And sometimes Apostilles can be complicated and can take some time.

A client may be from a foreign country and English may not be their first language, or a client may understand English perfectly but has never heard of an Apostille and is now being told he or she must get one (or several).

Your patience in providing an explanation of the product and the process will be of great importance and may make the difference of making the sale or not.

PERSISTENCE

Billie Jean King said, “Champions keep playing it until they get it right”.

Judi and Matt say, “Persistence is the vehicle which drives you to success.”

The Apostille business is sometimes complicated. When asking clients: which country is the Apostille going to? Does the document(s) require translation? What other specific requirements does the receiving country have? Sometimes you will find that those answers take some extensive research, and you must be persistent and not give up until you have the correct answers.

We encourage you to never settle, to follow the state guidelines, and always strive to give your clients the best and highest quality results.

And now, here are some important things you need to know to start your Apostille Business.

1. Apostille Ordering Forms

Each Secretary of State has its own ordering form. Here is a link for all of the forms which also appears on my resource page.

<https://www.allaboutapostilles.com/resources>

It is important that when filling out this form you list yourself as the receiving party. I am frequently asked if you want the Secretary of State to send the document(s) directly back to your client, I think this is a personal choice. I like to see the document(s) because I like to make sure they were Apostilled correctly. If there was an error, sometimes I can get it fixed before the client even knows. However, if you are

dealing with a simple matter such as a Birth Certificate, you might want to send it directly to the client so that they have it faster. However Matt, in his apostille business, chooses always to send the documents directly to his client(s).

2. Errors and Omissions Insurance

As an entrepreneur, you want to protect yourself from the unexpected. E&O Insurance is designed to protect you in the event of unintentional mistakes or a false claim against you that could cost you thousands of dollars to defend in court. Even if you are employed by and acting as an apostille agent for an employer, you should not assume that your employer has proper E&O Insurance coverage for you. The general public can file suit against you individually as an apostille agent as well as your employer for unintended errors that may occur. We recommend that you carry a minimum of \$100,000 in E&O insurance if you are a Notary Public that

covers notarial acts that you perform. Also, we suggest that you purchase a general business liability policy for your apostille business that covers all aspects of apostille services outside of notarial acts.

3. Setting Up Shipping Accounts

It is beneficial for you to set up accounts with FedEx, UPS and DHL. If you set up these accounts, you can use them online and provide your clients with tracking numbers upon request. Remember not all Secretaries of State accept FedEx or UPS and not using the correct carrier can cost you time and money. This information can usually be found on the Website of the specific Secretary of State from which you are requesting your completed apostilled documents.

Be aware that these companies often offer a volume discount to notaries. If you are not receiving such a discount, you may want to call each company and let them know you are a notary.

4. Messenger, Courier, How to Send Apostilles To SOS

If you are 3 minutes away from your Secretary of State's office, you can save lots of \$\$\$ by doing this yourself. If your SOS is farther away, another option is utilizing a courier service. A third option is a driver, sometimes referred to as an Expediter, who can go to the SOS offices a few times a week and get these document(s) apostilled for you.

Do your research and choose what is the best financial option for you and the most reliable.

Reliability - whomever you decide to handle your transactions, be sure they understand that it is critical to

your reputation that these document(s) be processed and returned in a timely manner.

Financially – make sure the fees to your clients include messenger fees, filing fees, shipping fees, notarial fees and that there is some profit for you.

5. Dealing With Deadlines

More often than not, your client will need their documents apostilled in a hurry. You have every right to offer expedited service **PROVIDED** you can **PROVIDE** it! HOWEVER, no matter what kind of expedited service you offer, there can always be a glitch, it is called Force Majeure or an Act of God. One of the best examples is, you arrive at the Secretary of States' office only to discover that they are experiencing a power outage and will not be working until the next day. Not your fault but puts a crimp in the plan.

For the above reason, we recommend that you be sure to include the words “we respectfully suggest that you do not purchase plane or train tickets or make travel plans until the document(s) are delivered. We cannot be responsible for Force Majeure.”

Time for a quick story from Matt ...

Several years ago, I was called early in the morning by a financial firm in the South Bay for an Apostille request on a single document. When I arrived I was greeted by a very animated office manager. She told me that she needed their document Apostilled right away and explained that she was under the impression that I as a notary could Apostille the document onsite. She was surprised to learn about the entire process and that it can sometimes take days. She was devastated and frantic. '

“What am I going to do?!”, she pleaded. She then asked if there was any way that I could take the document directly to the SOS office that day, get it Apostilled and return it that evening. I thought about it for a moment and then said, “I can try but it will be expensive for you.” Being a financial firm, I was informed that money wasn't an issue, so I sprang into action. I called my network of notary buddies and offloaded all scheduled appointments for the rest of the day. I also called my contact at the Secretary's office, explained my situation and was told that they would be waiting for me. I literally ran to my car, drove 2+ hours to the SOS office, obtained the Apostille and then drove 2+ hours back and hand delivered the completed document to the client. She was amazed that I actually showed up, even though it was past 5:00 pm on a Friday. *I was promptly*

paid, not only for my normal notary and Apostille fees but also I negotiated a substantial additional courier fee for making it happen that day.

The moral of this story is, if I didn't have a network of trusted notary buddies that I can rely on to take the day's appointments and a friendly contact at the secretary's office, not only would this client have been left unfulfilled but I would have missed out on an incredible opportunity. The one thing that you should do right now, is go to the LIN website and join the Friends of Apostilles Directory so that when you find yourself in an urgent situation like the one I found myself in, you will be in a position to go the extra mile and seize the opportunity.

6. Don't Say "YES" to a Job You Can't Do

It is extremely important to note that sometimes you just cannot do a job, especially if the time frame does not allow you to do it. You would be far better off saying no to the client and explaining that you do not promise something that you cannot deliver. In my experience I have found that the client will have more respect for you, and the next time he or she needs something apostilled they will be more apt to call you before anyone else.

7. Accepting Credit Cards

There are many services that provide you with the ability to accept credit cards online. You can accept payments through PayPal (www.paypal.com), Square (square.com), Stripe (Stripe.com), Apple Pay (applepay.com), Venmo (Venmo.com), Cash App (cashapp.com), credit and debit cards and by the time you read this in all probability there

will be more options. It is our suggestion that you watch for the following:

- Length of the Contract - Many contracts for these services have built in renewals, so it is important that you track these renewal dates. If you want to make a change and do not communicate with the company in time you could be left with another 1–2-year contract.
- Service Fees – Obviously, the lower the rate the better.
- Termination Fees – Again, you want to know the

length of the contract and when it expires so if you want to opt out you can do so without paying a termination fee.

- Technical Support – If you run into problems, you want to make sure there is a team available to help you.
- Compatibility with Your Invoicing system - If you can tie your credit card transactions into your invoicing system, it means less work for you and/or your accountant or bookkeeper down the road.

8. INVOICING

Invoicing is one of the critical functions of your success. Having the ability to issue invoices to businesses and individuals is essential in the Apostille business.

Starting out, you do not need an expensive system with lots of bells and whistles. Matt started out using Square, which allows you to send email invoices, track payments and send follow up reminders on unpaid invoices. Judi uses QuickBooks. She says that learning Quick Books can be a little difficult at first, however once you get the hang of it, it is very user-friendly and gives you and your accountant all the numbers that are necessary. (www.quickbooks.com). Another good feature is you can issue email receipts and sometimes that is how clients retain your contact information for future work.

9. SCHEDULING SYSTEM

A scheduling system is imperative in any business, especially the apostille business. You will need to keep track of your appointments with clients, set aside time for calls with competent authorities to follow up on requests, shipping deadlines for your outgoing document(s), and reminders for apostilles that you are waiting for amongst many other daily tasks. Also, you may want to set up an online booking system for your website so that customers may self-book an appointment with you online. You should do your own research to find what solution works best for you. However, we recommend: Google Calendars, Apple iCal, Acuity and Calendly to start.

10. Tracking System

You will also need a good ***tracking system***. You will need to keep track of where your document(s) are from *inception* to *completion*. You have learned in this book that there are times when your document(s) go to more than one place. It is important that you know:

- A file name and/or number
- When you sent the document(s).
- The mode in which you sent them (messenger, FedEx, etc.); and
- Where you sent them.

We recommend you retain a scanned copy of the documents you send for Apostille.

11. Business Cards

Your ***business card*** is **pivotal**. I hear many times that people

do not keep them anymore, they just scan them into their contacts but remember - they need to have something to scan. Make sure your business card is **informative** and includes your Apostille Services – and any other non-Apostille services that you offer.

Some people make a separate business card for their Apostille business ... There is no right or wrong but making use of your card reflects that you handle Apostilles and you are an expert in doing so.

CRITICAL NOTE: Be sure you have no errors on your business card. A client will immediately feel that if you made mistakes on your own business card you will make mistakes on their job.

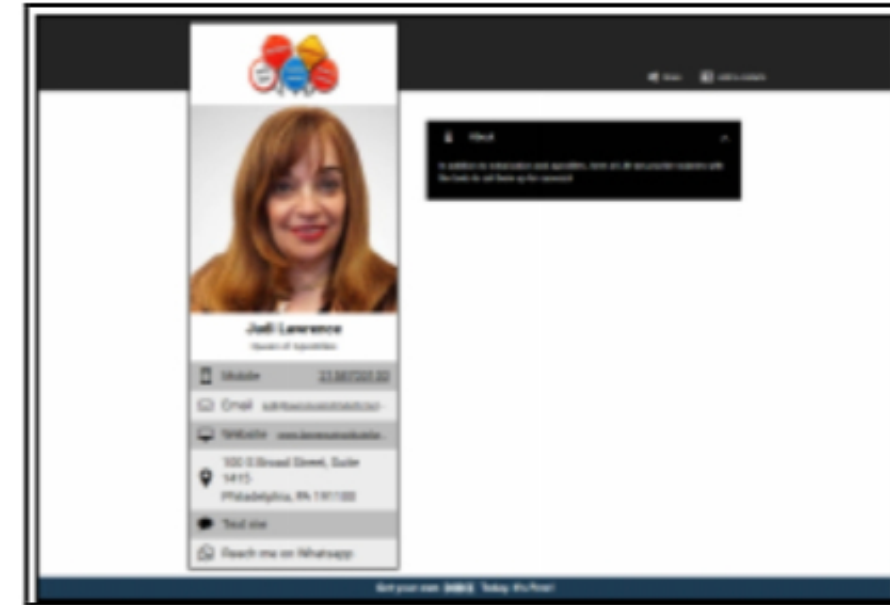
CRITICAL NOTE: Be sure you have the appropriate language on your business card stating that you are not an attorney and cannot offer legal advice.

12. Digital Signatures

Our use of digital signatures is so that you can communicate, by text or email and make sure your clients have your contact information on their phone or computer quickly. This is helpful in quotes, status emails, receipts, invoices, etc.

Here is a sample:

Judi –



<https://www.dibiz.com/judi-1>

Matt -

Matt Miller

Notary Public / Apostille Agent

www.mmmobilenotary.net

matt@mmmobilenotary.net

415-448-7343

12. Color Code Your Files

The Apostille business moves quickly. Because we are all so busy doing so many things, we suggest that you **color code** your files. That means that if all of your Apostille files are red, and the SOS from Michigan calls to ask for something they need to complete your request, or a client calls for an update, you can quickly go to your red files and find the right one. This **EFFICIENT** system will save you **TIME** which will make you **MONEY**.

13. Outlook Folders

Whether you use Outlook, Applemail, Gmail or any other or any other type of email system, you need to get into the habit from day one of creating folders for (i) for everything that you may want or need to use again in the future, and (ii) anything that you don't want to lose if and when the system purges older files or document(s). This reduces clutter in your inbox.

So, when you do your first job for a client who will be using his or her document(s) in China, and you do your due diligence and learn what needs to be done for documents being used in China, we suggest you create a folder and call it "China Apostilles." That way, the next time you do a job for China, you click on the folder and have all of the information at your fingertips, rather than having to start all over.

14. Contacts

Your contacts are your most valuable asset. You are now entering into a business which is fast-paced, and you will need to keep up. Today, when most businesspeople receive a call, they immediately save the number to contacts. Sometimes people save the information by name; sometimes it is smarter to save the information by state. For example, when speaking to Secretaries of States regarding Apostille requests, you might want to save everything under the

specific office, i.e., Apostille CA (Apostille California). If there is a specific name of a person that you have worked with, you can add that information in your notes. This makes you very efficient; the next time you need this information, you only have to go to your Contacts and it will be at your fingertips..

15. Critical Messages to Clients

As an Apostille Agent, you need to inform every client that he or she should NOT buy a plane ticket, train ticket or bus ticket until the Apostilles are in his or her hands. Things can

happen, bad weather, an accident, or the Secretary of State has equipment problems and is unavailable for two days. You do not want to be responsible for costs incurred in the event of any such force majeure. If your client knows in advance that he or she will be leaving the country before the job is expected to be completed, you need to make arrangements as to how you will ship the completed order to them and who will pay for that service.

PART 8

MANAGING YOUR DAY- TO-DAY BUSINESS

WHERE TO FIND CLIENTS

This is another frequently asked question. “Where will I find business?” It is the question people ask no matter what new business venture they are entertaining. Large companies are known to use focus groups to decide on a new location. Smaller companies may not have the resources to afford that luxury. For those looking to start an Apostille business here is a suggestion... look around you and figure out where you

can draw business from.

If your business is located in a city environment it may be a bit easier. Judi’s business is in the heart of Center City, Philadelphia. Her office is surrounded by office buildings, hospitals, Universities and government office all located within a 10-mile radius. She is also located 1/2 block from the Courthouse. Accordingly, she can capture Apostille work from local clients in all sectors. Matt’s business is strictly mobile and he drives to clients in every direction for a 30 mile radius to capture Apostille work in his area. Also, if your business is located near your state capitol, you can acquire Apostille work from all over the country, facilitating the final step in obtaining an apostille in your state for apostille agents in every other state.

But what if your business is located in a more rural area? That can present some other interesting opportunities... you

just may have to look a little harder. Where is the closest university and do they have an international school? Are you close to a pharmaceutical company? Have you checked your community news to ascertain where and when international groups meet, and can you perhaps snag an opportunity to speak?

It can take years to get a new client and 30 seconds to lose one.

A few years ago, I did a job for a woman who needed an Apostille for her son's birth certificate. I discovered that my client was a journalist and right away I pitched her to do a story on my company. I used a translator for the first time and they took a long time and did a terrible job. I was embarrassed but I called her and explained that the job was not done well and I was going to take it to another translator at my own expense which I did. I could not charge my client

for the job. I finally delivered the completed job to her and I thought to myself, "I will never see her again." About 2 years later she came in with another job. I said to her, "I am so glad you came back, I know the first job didn't work out so well," and she replied, "you were totally professional, you fixed it and that impressed me." The moral of the story is to own up to your mistakes, make it right and never lose that professional image that is so important to a customer.

A few words of caution... ***under promise and over deliver***. Be careful about mentioning you are a 24- hour business if you don't want to answer the phone after 8:00 pm. Better to have a message that says "calls after 8:00 pm will be returned on the next business day" than to seem like you do not mean what you say. When pitching a new account, never promise someone that you will always be available to pick up their Apostilles, and then the first time they call you have

to apologize but say you cannot make it over. To build this business up you are going to have to let your clients know that your word is gold.

The accidental great client. Judi says, when I teach Apostilles, I am frequently asked, “how do I find clients?” Some time ago, I was doing a loan signing in a large law firm in downtown PA. When I was finished, one of the partners said his uncle was in the conference room and needed a notarization and could I do it. It turned out that his uncle needed 10 notarizations. Some of them needed acknowledgements and I had to go and ask if I could use a computer and a printer and print the acknowledgements so Uncle Roger could choose the one he wanted. This took time and I needed to get back to my office, but I also wanted the firm to like me. Uncle Roger was watching me carefully. As it turned out, his office and mine are a few blocks away from

each other. He also is the owner of a large pharmaceutical company, but I did not know that at the time. When I completed the job, he said that I was the most professional notary he had ever met, and he would be using my services for everything in the future. His company uses **Apostilles** and he is one of my steady clients for both his business and professional notarial needs. Had I not kept a positive attitude and done what I needed to do, the results may have been different.

“In my 40 years of international business, I have never worked with anyone offering notarial services as knowledgeable and as thorough as Judy Lawrence. Providing the highest level of professional service, Judy (or Ms. Lawrence as you prefer) stands out from everyone else in making herself available to meet her client’s needs. She is a true partner in ensuring our business success.”

—Roger Korman, Ph.D, Executive
Chairman DMD Marketing Corp.

NETWORKING

Networking your Apostille business is, in many ways, the same as networking any business.

Wikipedia says that the definition of business networking is “a socioeconomic business activity by which businesspeople and entrepreneurs meet to form business relationships and to recognize, create or act upon business opportunities, share information and seek potential partners for ventures.”

We say that Networking can be defined as where you go, what you do, who you speak to, and how you represent yourself and the service you want to provide.

Apostilles are document(s) for use in a foreign country. That said, companies that do business in foreign countries are a good target. But average people need Apostilles too, young people who decide to teach abroad for a few years, people who are getting married overseas or adopting children will need them as well.

Joining and/or supporting organizations is an important element of networking. It used to be that you had to physically go to meetings and mix and mingle but now many of these meetings are held virtually. Consider chamber of commerce meetings, local organizations such as Postmasters, if you are a woman there are numerous organizations for women in business. I was once asked to do a simple notarization for the Pennsylvania Ballet. I engaged them in conversation and for a small check, I became a sponsor in their Playbook.

TECHNOLOGY

Why And How You Need To Use The Internet To Grow Your Business

It was already starting before the pandemic, but now, even more so, having a presence on the Internet is imperative if you want to find and retain new business. When the phone first came out, people resisted using it but now, everybody has a phone and many times multiple phones. Nobody would consider running a business without a phone. Now, it's the Internet and not having a web presence is like trying to run a business without a phone. Unless you have a wide network of established clients and a lot of word of mouth, you need to be online to find new business.

The good news is that in today's world with the right technology a small business has the same chance as a large corporation to make a good first impression on new clients.

Websites

In 2021, no business can survive without a good internet presence. Judi and Matt both say that most of their day-to-day business comes from people searching for “apostille near me”.

The first step is to decide what type of website you need. There are low cost to high cost solutions so you need to determine which is right for you based on your budget and how involved you want to be with it.

The second step is to recognize that, after you have a website, you need a marketing plan. The marketing plan involves a few major components:

1. Get setup so the Search Engines recognize the CATEGORY of your business (Search Engine Optimization).
2. Build confidence & trust so that once they know your CATEGORY, they will rank you.
3. Engage in your website on a regular basis as a communication tool to serve your client base and build relationships with potential new clients.

If you hire someone to help you, you need to have confidence they are directing you in a comprehensive plan that encompasses a professional presentation but also includes important elements to help you rank and convince the search engines to rank you higher.

Matt uses Square Space and controls all aspects of his website. Judi uses a professional service called ellectricstorefront.com.

Visit: <https://www.RemoteWebDesignAndMarketing.com> to find out more.

Online Reviews

Most people use online reviews to make purchase decisions, so your online reviews are one of your most important assets. 90% of potential customers read online reviews before selecting a business for services and 88% of customers trust online reviews as much as personal word of mouth recommendations. Getting reviews is just as important as having reviews, so don't forget to ask your customers for their feedback. We suggest adding a quick message to your email signature, invoices and website

asking for a review. Providing a link to your review pages makes this easy for your customers and will increase the number of reviews that you receive. Currently Google has the most prominent online review site and having Google reviews increases the potential that you appear near the top of search results. While Google's online reviews are a great starting place, it should not be the only element to your online review strategy. Not everyone has a Google Account, something that is required to leave a google review, and Google isn't the only online review platform that can rank in the search results. Yelp's online review platform is also a great general option for small businesses. Yelp touts an astounding 135 million unique users and, while tilted towards restaurants and food service, it provides categories for almost every type of business. Yelp reviews can also show up in Google and Bing search results. Facebook is an

online review site not to be forgotten. One main advantage to Facebook reviews is that most of your customers use Facebook and will already be logged in allowing you to easily direct them straight to your review page. Facebook reviews may not be on par with Google and Yelp reviews, but the platform is working hard to beef up its reviews product. Last, are industry-specific online review sites which are a great way to supplement your online review strategy. Do a quick search for "Notary Public review" and you'll likely find a number of reviews from various notary specific sites like 123notary, NotaryRotary and NotaryCafe. These supplemental online review sites are crucial for any complete online review strategy. Use them to your advantage, but don't rely on them as your sole engine for online reviews.

Please... Please... Answer the Phones!

We cannot stress this enough, if you want to be successful as an Apostille Agent, or any other type of notary business, you need to answer the phones. Nothing as annoying to a potential customer as calling and getting no answer. If you advertise 24-hours, you need to answer the phones all 24 hours. If you are not amenable to doing this, you would be better off to have a recording that says that calls after 8:00 PM will be returned the following business day. You want to build your business and to do what is needed to establish reliability, and that what you say you are going to do is what you do.

I recall needing a courier service recently on a Saturday afternoon. I Google searched for and found a specific company I then called. The person who answered the phone explained that they were currently in the grocery

store and in fact did not have a price list with them. They said that if I could wait an hour or so, they would call me back with a quote. Suffice to say within an hour I had engaged another courier. What could the first person I contacted have done to make the sale? Simply, they could have told me that they were in a noisy spot and that they needed a moment to get to a quieter spot and then they could give me a quote and take care of my request. In 2021, many people are working remotely and in that environment one needs to be armed with prices and availability or, in the alternative, the caller will reach out to the next number on the list.

Google Ad Campaigns

In the fast-paced world we live in, Google ads can get you in front of customers when they're searching for services

like yours on Google Search, google Maps and on the google display ad network. You only pay for results, like clicks to your website or calls to your business.

Google is where people search for what to do, where to go, and what to buy. Your digital ads can appear on Google at the very moment someone is looking for Apostille services like yours. Whether they're on desktop or mobile, a well-timed ad can turn people into valuable customers.

With Google Ads you can target relevant customers within a set budget. Plus, their smart technology will help you improve your ads over time to get more of the results that matter to your business.

Facebook Ad Campaigns

In the Apostille world, a Facebook Campaign can be a good tool to develop your business.

What makes Facebook ads really effective is the level of audience targeting, the number of hits on the platform and the level of analytics and insights. These components, combined with a great *ad*, is why Facebook ads work so well for so many types of business.

Google My Business

Google My Business is a free, multi-featured business listing that local businesses use to manage their presence on Google Search and Google Maps. Google My Business is a lot like a listing on online business directories, but it's found directly in Google and Google Maps search results, and therefore doesn't require a customer to visit to a a third-party site like the ones mentioned below. Having an up up-to to-date Google My Business listing will make it easier for customers in your area to find you, read reviews about your business and even book an appointment with you. According to an

industry survey from Whitespark, Google My Business is the number one local ranking factor. That means that Google My Business has the most impact on where your business appears in search results for local businesses.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook Pages / Facebook Groups

You need to let people know that you handle Apostilles and your Facebook presence is going to do just that.

What is the difference between a Facebook Page and a Facebook Group? A Facebook page is like a profile only public so everyone on Facebook can view it. It enables businesses, public figures and other organizations to build a presence on the platform.

Facebook Groups are dominating the Notary/Apostille industry right now. There are over 50 groups and growing. It is easy to create and administer one. Having a group creates a place for chatter and announcements of accomplishments

and upcoming events. Being a member of these groups will help your Apostille business because you will be collaborating with others across the country who are doing the same thing.

Be Careful of Information Circulated on Facebook

We have talked about Facebook Pages and Facebook Groups and the positive influence they will add to your Apostille business. Now we want to talk about the negatives.

Facebook pages and Facebook groups are free tools and easy to use. Sometimes when a person asks a question, you might get 50 or more responses to the question. Sometimes 40 of those well-meaning responses are by inexperienced and the responses they post are incorrect. The recipient of those answers may end up going down a one-way street the wrong way.

We see many people post that it is not necessary to get Apostille training. You just put the document(s) in an envelope and send it off to the Secretary of State. The problems with that are some of as follows:

1. What Secretary of State do you send it to? Apostilles need to go to the Secretary of State of the State of Origination of the document(s);
2. Is the country of destination a Hague country or a non-Hague country? Are the processes different?
3. Does the document(s) require translation?
4. Does the document(s) need to be notarized?
5. Do you have the appropriate cover / order letter?
6. What are the fees?
7. If you are shipping, what method of shipping do they accept. Example, the state of Pennsylvania

will accept a FedEx label and will only use a UPS label for return shipping.

It is for these reasons that we strongly suggest that you are careful about misinformation posted on social media.

Clubhouse

In short, Clubhouse is an audio-based social media platform allowing people everywhere to talk, listen, teach, tell stories, develop ideas, create and/or deepen friendships and meet interesting new people around the world. With no camera on, you don't have to worry about eye contact, what you are wearing, or where you are. On a daily basis people are offering training, coaching, mentoring and other helpful business tips. For example, the inspiration for this book was born on Clubhouse. We have a weekly meeting on

Wednesday nights where we field questions and answers to all Apostille Agents throughout the country.

Instagram

In 2021 it is estimated that Instagram has approximately one billion monthly active users. It is a free, entirely visual platform. Instagram allows users to upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. Unlike Facebook, which includes texts and photos, or Twitter, which relies only on texts, the sole purpose of Instagram is to allow users to share images or videos with their clients. Instagram includes direct messaging. You can connect your Facebook Accounts to Instagram and accordingly, it has become a main platform of communication.

Instagram is an excellent platform to reach potential private party clients. Direct messaging has become a prevailing

way to communicate with potential clients from all over the world who may need your services and want to obtain information from you.

Linkedin

LinkedIn is now the world's largest professional network on the internet. You can use LinkedIn to connect and strengthen personal and business relationships. LinkedIn is available in 24 languages and 30 million companies and 90,000 schools are presently using the platform. It is an excellent place to let others know of your services, accomplishments and presentations.

If you are searching for Apostille clients, you will want to learn how to use LinkedIn so that you can connect with

potential clients across the country.

Twitter

Essentially, Twitter is a form of texting. Twitter has 330 million monthly active users. However, rather than sending a text to one person, users can broadcast their messages all over the world. Tweets can only be 140 characters and can include links to your Apostille websites and other resources. If you are looking to broadcast your Apostille services globally, TWITTER is an excellent place to do that.

What's App

WhatsApp uses your phone's cellular or wifi connection to facilitate messaging and voice calling to nearly anyone on the planet, alone or in a group. It serves more than 2 billion people in over 180 countries, with over 1 billion daily users. The app dominates India, Germany, Russia and the UK. It is

free to use and you can host video chats on both desktop and mobile devices. When your Apostille business thrives and you need to talk to people abroad, this is your app of choice.

Youtube

YouTube is the second most visited site in the world with more than one billion monthly users who collectively watch more than one billion hours of videos EACH DAY. The platform provides a simple way for people to store videos online and share them with others. It covers any topic anyone cares to upload a video about. These videos are shared via other forms of social media, email and websites. This is an awesome way of not only learning, but letting others know that you are an Apostille Agent and what you can do to assist them.

Blogging

A blog may sound much more complicated than it really is. A blog is just an idea – one which you want to share. Blogging was originally started so travelers could share their experiences but now it is largely so companies can share ideas with clients. Blogging is actually just posting material that will impress clients with your company's knowledge of different subjects. Blogging allows your clients to see that you are the "expert." If done correctly, it can build trust in you and your company.

The good news is that blogging is very easy to set up and somewhat affordable. There are free blog site options such as WordPress.com and Blogger, but to retain control and keep a professional image, we advise that you use your own domain name and host, and install WordPress or another content management system on your host. Most web hosts offer this

option.

Search engine optimization rules the roost and is closely entwined with blogging. My blog is set so that if someone searches "Apostille" on the internet, my blog comes up as a result of that search. (*Make Your Business Our Business*)

Notary Directories

Notary Directories can be a great resource to launch your Apostille business. You do, however, need to be careful about paid sites. You need to be certain that they have integrity, and their membership benefits are what they purport them to be.

Where you need to be careful is the unknown directories, the ones that say, "For \$29.00 A month we will get you thousands of new clients." If it is too good to be true, in most instances it is. Check them out, to talk to others that have

used them and make your decision appropriately. And most of all, do not make any contractual commitments that you cannot easily undo.

National and State Associations, such as the NNA (National Notary Association) and PAN (Pennsylvania Association of Notaries) are typically going to be the model. With thousands of members, they would be hard pressed to scam

anyone and jeopardize their hard-earned reputations.

Then you have smaller but also highly thought of directories such as www.123Notary.com, www.NotaryRotary.com and www.NotaryCafe.com. By putting “Apostilles” in your profiles you are sure to get calls.

PART 9

THE FUTURE; E-APOSTILLES

Apostille Agents should stay astute to the development and implementation of the e-App program as this service will become more in-demand over time as the paper world moves further into the digital one. The e-Apostille may provide a powerful new revenue stream for your business. For more information about the e-Apostille and e-Register program, which competent authorities have implemented the programs and how you can encourage your state to implement the e-App, visit The Hague Conference on Private International Law website at: <http://www.hcch.net>

Although the Hague Convention was written with a paper environment in mind, technology has changed the way

governments operate. E-Government projects are being pursued at all levels of government all over the world. At an exponential rate, government agencies are executing government document(s) in electronic form including civil, commercial and consumer document(s). As you may be aware, Notarial acts are being executed online as well called Remote Online Notarization or In Person Electronic Notarization. Also, the availability of online government services is growing in popularity due to the general public and businesses conducting electronic transactions as part of the normal course of daily business. As a result, consumers and businesses are just a click away from government agencies online.

The future of Apostille work is turning towards e-Apostilles (eAps) and Apostilles on electronically signed or notarized documents. State administrators are in the beginning

stages of grappling with the issues surrounding eApostilles, apostilles on electronically signed, but traditionally notarized records and RONS and RINs. The Hague Convention is committed to the concept of eApostilles, but most states in the U.S. as well as the government entities in most other countries are still hesitant to embrace the technology. However, the momentum is building and apostille agents would be wise to anticipate how to handle transactions involving the electronic transmission of notarized records.

The e-App program not only moves the Apostille from the paper world into the electronic realm but it also allows for online verification of the authenticity of an Apostille, both electronic and paper, called the electronic register. The e-Register component of the e-App program provides a powerful tool to combat fraud and abuse of Apostilles

by offering a level of security that far exceeds current standards in the paper environment. Also, it promotes a paperless operation of the Hague Convention, thus being more environmentally friendly and forward-looking. If a competent authority operates an e-Register, the web address of the e-Register is mentioned on the Apostille and may also be found in the Apostille Section of the Hague Conference website.

To reflect the reality of the digital world we are now living in, the Hague Conference on International Law allows for the Electronic Apostille as an option for competent authorities who implement the e-Apostille Program (e-App), worldwide. The Electronic Apostille program allows for the issuance of electronic Apostilles (e-Apostille) with an accompanying electronic register of Apostilles (e-Register) that the general-public can access to verify the authenticity of an Apostille.

Since the launch of the e-App program in 2006, California, Colorado, Kansas, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington and West Virginia have implemented the e-Register program but only 2 states have implemented the e-Apostille program, both Montana and Kansas.

SOS Can Verify A Lost Apostille

How to Verify an Apostille

In many jurisdictions it will be necessary to contact the Competent Authority by phone to verify the authenticity of the apostille. However, to simplify the process, many Competent Authorities have implemented online electronic registries (e-registries) that enable holders to verify its origin. Typically it is an easy process requiring the user to enter the apostille number and issue date. An example of a typical data entry screen follows.

Apostille Verification

Apostille Number:

and

Issue Date: mm/dd/yyyy

Begin SearchReset

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PART 10

APOSTILLE AND RON

(REMOTE ONLINE NOTARIZATION)

We have received many questions about whether or not RON documents will be accepted for Apostille.

The answer is yes, provided:

- The state where the Apostille is being requesting has passed RON legislation;
- The secretary of states' office will accept a RON

document for Apostille; and

- The country of destination of the Apostille will accept an RON document.

The following slides are as a result of an informal survey conducted with Secretaries of States offices. Please keep in mind that this is moving at a fast pace and by the time you read this, it could have changed.

In addition, because a Secretary of State accepts remotely notarized documents for Apostille, does not necessarily mean that a recipient will accept remotely notarized documents.

STATE	PHONE	YES/NO
Alabama	334-242-7200	No
Alaska	907-465-2530	No
Arizona	602-542-4285	Yes
Arkansas	501-682-3409	No
California	916-657-5448	No
Colorado	303-894-2200	TBD
Connecticut	860-509-6002	No
Delaware	302-739-3073	No
Florida	850-488-6800	Yes

Georgia	470-312-2743	No
Hawaii	808-586-2744	No
Idaho	208-334-2301	No
Indiana	317-223-6531	TBD
Iowa	515-281-5204	Yes
Kansas	785-296-4564	No
Kentucky	502-564-3499	No
Louisiana	225-922-0507	No
Maine	207-626-8400	No
Maryland	410-974-5521	No
Massachusetts	617-727-7030	No

Michigan	888-767-6424	Yes
Minnesota	651-296-2803	No
Mississippi	601-359-1350	Yes
Missouri	573-751-4936	Yes
Pennsylvania	717-787-5280	Yes
Rhode Island	401-212-3030	No
South Carolina	803-734-2170	No
South Dakota	605-773-5004	Yes
Tennessee	615-741-2819	Yes
Texas	512-463-5555	TBD
Utah	801-5304849	No

Vermont	802-828-2364	Yes
Virginia	804-371-9967	No
Washington DC	202-727-6306	No
West Virginia	304-558-6000	No
Wisconsin	608-266-8888	Yes
Wyoming	307-777-7311	Yes

PART 11

TIPS FOR APOSTILLE AGENTS

1. Always Check Your State Guidelines

You must be aware that each state has their own rules and regulations and as the Apostille Agent, as it is your responsibility to always check the state guidelines to make certain you are adhering to those rules and regulations. There are different fee structures, different deadlines and different intake forms so take the time to check your state guidelines, or the guidelines for the specific state from which you are obtaining an Apostille.

2. You Must Never Commit the Unauthorized Practice of Law.

The unauthorized practice of law is engaging in the practice of law by persons or entities not authorized to practice law pursuant to state law or using the designations “lawyer”, “attorney at law”, “counselor at law”, “law”, “law office”, “J.D.”, “Esq.”, “NotarioPublico“ or other equivalent words by any person or entity not authorized to practice, the use of which is reasonably likely to induce others to believe that the person or entity is authorized to engage in the practice of law.

An Apostille Agent must be careful never to give legal advice of any kind or to be interpreted as providing such advice. Often, clients who request Apostilles speak in a foreign language and are unsure of what an Apostille Agent is and if what they are telling you is correct. You must be careful to not cross that line and provide any kind of legal advice.

3. Do You Have to be a Notary to be an Apostille Agent?

Although it is not mandatory by law, it is highly recommended that to be an Apostille Agent you are also a Notary Public for the following reasons:

- You are aware of Notary Public laws of your state;
- The majority of the document(s) you receive will require notarization;
- You will be able to recognize incorrect notarial certificate language;
- You will be aware of the general requirements of the Secretary of State of the state in which you reside; and
- You will know how to obtain information from other Secretaries of State.

4. Use a Facilitator to Assist You

In our experience, using a facilitator can help you coordinate your Non-Hague transactions. Remember this is a three-step process. For a small fee, once you have first-step or first-level authentication, the facilitator will walk the document(s) over to the Department of State and obtain legalization. They will pick them up when they are completed and either present them to the specific Embassy or return them to you. This is a good route, especially if you are doing this in volume. They will keep track of everything for you and make sure everything is completed in time and is correctly processed.

We recommend two companies. We disclose that we have no financial or other interest in the company, however.

US Authentications

Address 7015 Old Keene Mill Rd #203,
Springfield, VA 22150
Phone [\(703\) 971-7226](tel:7039717226)

Link <https://www.usauthentication.com/index.php>

Elite Document(s)

8135 McCauley Way #2106
Lorton, VA 22079
703-901-6773

5. Canadian Apostilles

FYI: you cannot get an Apostille in Canada. Canada is not a member of the Hague Convention and accordingly cannot issue an Apostille. The reason Canada has not joined the Hague Convention is because Canada is a province **of the UK** and there are issues between the way the provinces and the federal government are structured.

However, Canada has a process for obtaining Apostilles equivalent to our process and that is authentication and legalization. Here are the steps that one must take:

1. Follow the same steps as though getting a document(s) ready for presentation to the Secretary of State, i.e., notarization, copy certification, translation, etc.
2. Your document(s) must then be presented to Global Affairs Canada in Ottawa. They will confirm the authenticity of the document(s) and that it meets their other requirements and then they will place a stamp on the document(s) confirming its authentication.
3. The document(s) needs to be presented to the consulate of the recipient country. When they are satisfied with all you have done, they will place a

stamp or a certificate directly on the document(s) confirming legalization.

6. Puerto Rico Apostilles

If you are requesting an Apostille for document(s) in Puerto Rico, the document(s) cannot be more than 6 months old. In addition, the document(s) must have what is called a Notary Certification. This means that you must go the courthouse of the county in which your bond is filed. The county clerk will authenticate the Notary in good-standing and they will stamp the document(s) accordingly. Once this is done, the document(s) can be Apostilled by the processes we outlined for you depending on whether the document(s) will be used in a Hague Country or a Non-Hague Country.

If corporate records need to be apostilled, you must obtain an original document issued by the Puerto Rico Secretary of

State Corporation Bureau.

The website for the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration: www.prfaa.pr.gov. This office serves as the Government of Puerto Rico's primary liaison in the U.S. Capital and it also has a Florida Regional Office that serves and provides constituent services to over a million Puerto Rico residents in Florida. The office promotes the government of Puerto Rico's economic and public policy incentives to achieve a better quality of life for citizens living in Puerto Rico. This can be very helpful for Florida Apostille Agents doing apostille work for Puerto Rico.

The contact information for the PRFAA is:

Lake Ellenor Drive
6925 Suite 1011

Orlando, FL 32809

Telephone: 407-776-9000.

7. New York Apostilles

New York City has one of the highest demands for Apostille transactions in the country. Here are the steps you must follow to obtain an NY Apostille:

Notarization

The document(s) must be signed by a notary public. They are not extremely particular as to the type of notarization. However, the notary must be approved in the county where the Apostille will originate from. **The Apostille Agent** will need to go to the county where the notary has been commissioned to obtain a notary certification.

Obtaining the Apostille

To obtain the apostille, you will need to submit an order

form to the NY Secretary of State with a \$10 check per Apostille and a self-addressed stamped envelope with a return address. The address for the NY Secretary of State is:

New York State Department of State
Division of Licenses and Services
Apostille and Authentication Unit
123 Williams Street
New York, New York 10038

8. How To Order A Birth Certificate From Abroad

You may request multiple copies of this type of document(s) at any time.

The Consular Report of Birth document(s) are issued only to the subject of the Consular Report of Birth, the subject's parents (if the subject is under age 18) or legal

guardian. Effective September 1, 2003 all requests must be notarized and include a copy of the requester's valid photo identification.

To request a replacement Birth Certificate, write to:

Department of State
Passport Vital Records Section
44132 Mercure Cir.
PO Box 1213
Sterling, VA 20166-1213

Please include the following items:

1. The full name of the child at birth (and any adoptive name);

2. The date and place of birth;
3. The names of the parents;
4. Any available passport information;
5. The signature of the requestor and the requestor's relationship to the subject. If the subject is 18 years or older, they must provide a written statement authorizing a third party to act on their behalf.
6. A check or money order for \$50.00 made payable to the U.S. Department of State. Do Not Send Cash; and
7. To obtain a Consular Report of Birth in a new name, send a written request and fees as noted above, the original (or replacement) Consular Report of Birth, or if not available, a notarized affidavit about its whereabouts. Also, send a

certified copy of the court order or final adoption decree which identifies the child and shows the change of name within the request. If the name has been changed informally, submit public records and affidavits that show the change of name.

9. What Happens If An Apostille Is Lost?

On each Apostille there is an identifying number which is the Apostille Identification Number. If the Apostille gets lost, this number will assist the SOS in identifying the document(s). This is why you should make a copy of the cover, or at least record the identifying number for your records.

“The road to success is always under construction” – Lily Tomlin

NOW THAT YOU KNOW ...

Matt and I would like to thank each of you for reading our book. Now that you have taken this important step, you are well on your way. We understand that the Apostille business, especially in the beginning, may seem somewhat complex and you will have questions.

We are excited to offer you not only continuing training courses, but also individual coaching sessions. You are cordially invited to attend a JAM SESSION (Judi & Matt) with either or both of us. To participate, go to www.allaboutapostilles.com to register.

The definition of consulting is “engaged in the business of giving expert advice to people working in a professional or technical field.” Consulting with an expert **does not mean** you do not know what you are doing. It means that you want to do correctly and that you want to continue to improve, two excellent qualities to possess.

We developed this book as a ***Survival Handbook*** for you, now an Apostille Agent, to keep by your side throughout your journey. You will find instructions, forms, checklists, tips and much more.

Here are the five most important tips we included in this book ...

1. **ALWAYS CHECK YOUR STATE GUIDELINES.** You will be working with people from all states and

each state has very specific rules and guidelines which we encourage you to research and follow.

2. **KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAGUE COUNTRIES and NON-HAGUE COUNTRIES.**

This will be extremely important in setting yourself up as an Expert.

3. **KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN APOSTILLING A FEDERAL DOCUMENT AND A STATE DOCUMENT.**

If you do this incorrectly, the document(s) will be rejected and it will cost you time and money and most importantly, your reputation as an expert Apostille Agent.

4. **MAKE SURE YOU BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.** This includes Secretaries of State offices, Embassies, Consulates, County Clerk's Offices, and other Apostille Agents around the country.

KEEP THIS BOOK WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO. THIS BOOK WAS NOT WRITTEN TO LIVE ON A SHELF.

DEFINITIONS

- **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

A Notarial Act wherein a Notary certifies having positively identified a document(s) signer who personally appeared before the Notary and admitted having signed the document(s).

- **APOSTILLED**

The act of issuing an *Apostille* under the *Apostille Convention*. A document(s) for which an *Apostille* has been issued under the Convention and is referred to as having been “apostilled”. The issuance of an Apostille replaces the often cumbersome, time-consuming and costly process of *legalisation*.

- **APPLICANT**

The person making a request for an Apostille to be issued.

- **APOSTILLE**

I think the Maryland Secretary of State website says it best: “Apostilles do not certify the content of the public document(s) to which it relates. They do not grant authority and they do not give any additional weight to the content of the underlying document(s). An Apostille may never be used for the recognition of a document(s) in the country where that document(s) was issued.” *Maryland Secretary of State*

- **APOSTILLE AGENT A.K.A. APOSTILLE FACILITATOR**

An Apostille Agent will assist clients in obtaining Apostilles and Embassy Legalization. The Agent will understand the processes including where to obtain the Apostille, how to obtain the Apostille, fees, copies, translation, shipping, expediting, etc.

- **AUTHENTICATION**

“Authentication” is the process of verifying, or “authenticating” the origin of a public document(s). Traditionally, the process requires a chain of individual authentications of the document(s), involving officials of the country where the document(s) was issued as well as the foreign Embassy or Consulate of the country where the document(s) is to be issued. www.hcch.net, p.9

- **COMPETENT AUTHORITY**

Under the terms of the Hague Convention, each state in the United States serves as the “Competent Authority” for legalizing document(s). Generally, this authority rests with the Secretary of State’s office, although there are exceptions. www.hcch.net, sec. xviii

- **CONSULATE**

Activities of a consulate include **protecting the interests of their citizens temporarily or permanently resident in the host country**, issuing passports, issuing visas to foreigners and public diplomacy.

- **CONTRACTING AUTHORITY**

An authority designated by a *Contracting State* that is competent to issue *Apostilles*. A State may designate one or more Competent Authorities and may designate Competent Authorities that are only competent to issue *Apostilles* for certain categories of *public document(s)*. www.hcch.net, sec. xix

- **COUNTRY OF DESTINATION (“COD”)**

The Country of Destination (referred to as “**COD**”) is the Country where the document(s) will be used.

- **e-APOSTILLE**

An *Apostille* that is issued in electronic format with an electronic signature. The issuance of e-Apostilles is one of the two components of the *e-APP* (the other being the operation of *e-Registers*). Under the e-APP, e-Apostilles must be signed using a digital certificate. In this Handbook, the term e-Apostille is used in the e-APP context only.

www.hcch.net, **sec. xix**

- **e-APP**

“e-APP” is the acronym for “electronic Apostille Program” (previously known as the electronic Apostille *Pilot* Program). Launched in 2006 by the Hague Conference and the National Notary Association of the United States of America (NNA), the e-APP aims at promoting and assisting in the implementation of secure software technology for the issuance of *e-Apostilles*, and operation of *e-Registers*.

www.hcch.net **sec. xix**

- **JURAT**

A Jurat is a Notarial Act wherein a Notary certifies he or she having watched the signing of a document(s) and administered an oath or affirmation.

- **NOTARY PUBLIC (“Notary”)**

A Notary Public is an official of integrity appointed by the state government, typically by the secretary of state, to serve the public as an impartial witness in performing a variety of official fraud-deterrent acts related to the signing of important document(s). These official acts are called notarizations, or notarial acts. Notaries are publicly commissioned as “ministerial” officials, meaning that they are expected to follow written rules without the exercise of significant personal discretion, as would otherwise be the case with a “judicial” official. ***National Notary Association***

- **OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY STATE (sometimes referred to as "SOS")**

The Secretary of State's office governs the areas of elections, business, political campaigning, legislative advocacy, and historical records. The Secretary of State's responsibilities include: Serving as the state's Chief Elections Officer, , Maintaining business filings, Commissioning notaries public, Safeguarding the State Archives and issuing apostilles and authentications.

- **EMBASSY**

The primary purpose of an embassy is **to assist American citizens who travel to or live in the host country**. U.S. Foreign Service Officers also interview citizens of the host country who wish to travel to the United States for business, education, or tourism purposes. The main embassy building

is called the chancery.

- **LEGALIZATION**

The act of completing an Apostille and attaching it to the underlying public document(s) in order to authenticate its origin. **Apostille & Authentications Handbook, NPA, P. 24p.24**

- **OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AUTHENTICATIONS**

The Office of Authentications is responsible for signing and issuing certificates under the Seal of the AU.S. Department of State. It also ensures that the requested information will serve in the interest of justice and is not contrary to US policy. www.hcch.net, p.26

- **PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

Essentially, a public document(s) is a document(s) that is executed by an authority or a person acting in an official

capacity, and includes the categories of document(s) listed in Article I(2) of the Convention. The determination of what constitutes a public document(s) is entirely a matter for the law of the state of origin. www.hcch.net, p.27

- **REGISTER OF APOSTILLES**

This is a Register in Which a Competent Authority records the particulars of each Apostille issued. The Apostille Convention requires each Competent Authority to maintain a Register of Apostilles. www.hcch.net, p. 35

- **STATE OF ORIGINATION (“SOA”)**

The State of Origination (“SOA”) is the state where the document(s) originated.

- **UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW**

Practice of law by a person who is not an attorney or a legal professional. It may also be construed as a non-attorney in helping another person to draft, prepare, complete, select or understand a document(s) or transaction.

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