



Book Smarts OR **Street Smarts?**

In a recent series of reality TV's *The Apprentice*, the ultimate corporate job interview, Donald Trump pitted people with formal education (book smarts) against people lacking higher education but with lots of business experience (street smarts).

Many of the book-smart people were lawyers; all had tons of education, as well as a capacity for critical thinking acquired through higher education. These young bloods, however, were often disadvantaged by their lack of practical experience in the business world. The street-smart people, by comparison, had only high school education but had achieved success in their own businesses. They often had the edge because of their creativity and willingness to take risks that their more educated competitors would have never considered.

It seems to me that neither type of apprentice really had the combination of skills and experience sought by The Donald for his corporate team.

This leads me to ask: What does it take to be a successful Notary?

Some of us had formal university education at the start of our careers but not much in the way of practical experience in the profession.

Others had less formal university education, but had achieved a certain business success before being accepted as Notary candidates. Years of on-the-job training and experience in related occupations helped prepare us to become Notaries.

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Today, it would be foolhardy to underestimate the importance of higher education. In our high-tech world—where decisions and judgments need to be made in a matter of minutes rather than hours or days—critical thinking is an essential skill.

My view is that a Notary needs both book smarts and street smarts to best serve clients. Today, all candidates for a career as a Notary Public must have university degrees. There is a similar requirement for other careers and callings—whether you want to train as a journalist, an ESL

teacher, an airline pilot, or a student of theology.

My children are facing this now. For them, the university degree has replaced the high school diploma as the launching point for a professional career. This benchmark for starting a career as a Notary Public will result in a better educated and more effective generation of Notaries.

But we must, as a profession, be careful not to think that “book smarts” are a substitute for the “street smarts” that come from years on the job. The veteran Notary, even though he or she may lack a degree in English literature or commerce, still has a lot to teach the next generation of Notaries. This is why I think it is so important that new Notaries avail themselves of all the mentoring opportunities and continuing education offered by The Society of Notaries Public.

The Education Committee and the Board of Directors of The Society recognize the value of giving our students the practical experience that formal education alone just can't provide. Theory is invaluable, but without the practical knowledge to apply the theory, a Notary doesn't have all the tools necessary to be effective in practice.

