



FCT SPOTLIGHT

**A Conversation with Fortinet
Certified Trainer and NSE 8: Sylvia
Schlaphof, Head of Engineering at
Swiss-based BOLL, an IT Security
Distribution Company**



Fortinet accredits Authorized Training Centers (ATCs) in 83 countries and territories around the world to deliver Fortinet NSE Certification Program training in local languages. Assessed and certified ATCs meet stringent requirements to ensure their Fortinet Certified Trainers (FCTs) demonstrate expertise and proficiency with Fortinet products and solutions combined with proven instructional training skills.

Sylvia Schlaphof, Head of Engineering at BOLL Engineering Corporation, an IT Security Distribution Company, recently sat down with us to discuss the history of the Fortinet Boll partnership, her journey as a Fortinet NSE 8 and her passion as a Fortinet Certified Trainer.

Founded in 1988, BOLL Engineering Corporation is one of the leading companies in the field of Swiss IT distribution. This value-added distributor of IT security products markets innovative solutions in the areas of network and email security, identity and access management, as well as server load balancing. BOLL provides its network of 800 resellers with comprehensive services that go well beyond conventional distribution support.

When did you begin offering Fortinet training?

Boll started working with Fortinet in 2002. We began by first using the Fortinet products. We developed a solid understanding of what it was like to install, support, and troubleshoot FortiGate. Once we built that knowledge, we determined that training our channel was an important next step. This began in 2004.

We helped build the Swiss market by training resellers early. We were seeing an uptake in market demand for Fortinet and Boll made a strategic decision to place a high value on training to build the channel. Well-trained System Engineers at our partners were not only successful sellers but were also successful at implementation on customer premises.

Why did you decide to become an FCT and how has your role evolved?

I was a trainer for another firewall vendor before I started training on Fortinet. I have always loved to train people; to share my passion and knowledge. When I was introduced to Fortinet in 2003, I felt it was a great product so I was keen to add it to my training portfolio.

As Fortinet developed their training and programs, Boll adopted them. I was one of the first FCTs from a partner organization to become certified. All the trainings and product support that I had completed made me well prepared and ready for certification in 2005.



Overtime, Boll became bigger and very successful in Switzerland with Fortinet. The demand for training grew to a point that I couldn't manage it myself. Luckily, I had some great System Engineers at my side and I asked them to start Fortinet training. I shared my experiences with them; what I was doing and how I was doing it. Soon, they too joined the FCT program and we're now a team of four FCTs at Boll.

What makes you a good trainer?

I think one of the most critical aspects of being a good trainer is to have real-life experiences that you can share and bring into the classroom. I do not want my time fully dedicated to training. If I did, I wouldn't have the experiences to share with students.

The combination of being a Support Engineer and a teacher provides a lot of synergy. As an example, as a Support Engineer I may see a particular challenge reoccurring across customers or a consistent question that our team receives daily. I can use this knowledge and apply it to the training to ensure I spend more time explaining a particular topic.

The other side of this is that if I better address a potential problem in training then I'll reduce the support calls our team receives. It's a great synergy between the two roles with clear benefits for students, resellers and Boll.

On a personal level, I am a very enthusiastic and passionate teacher. I really like my job and the product. I appreciate the product and students can see it and they feel this energy.

What's the greatest benefit of NSE Training for your students?

For an employer here in Europe, and in particular Switzerland, it's very difficult to find highly skilled and trained cybersecurity personnel. If you're well trained and you are certified, it's easy to get a job with a good salary.

If you are a reseller and you have a well-trained employee that is good at installing FortiGate, this builds success for the reseller and for Boll, the distributor. The ability to properly demonstrate the product and install it correctly is critical. If you're not knowledgeable and the end-user sees that you're not successful on the install then that will leave a bad impression of the product and the reseller. We don't want that. It's critical that our resellers are trained to manage the products they are selling

What's unique about training in Switzerland?

Small and medium-sized businesses play a fundamental role in the Swiss economy. We train people across a multitude of sectors. If you have people from the same sector, they can share their experiences and challenges.

Of course, sharing experiences is much easier if you are speaking the same language. We support training in English, French and German. If training is provided in the native language, I find people are less intimidated to ask questions and get involved in the training class.

What do you view as the most important part of training?

To make training interesting you have to tell a story so your learners understand why they are learning and why it's important to learn. The goal is that they really learn the product. How is it working? How is it designed? What is the background? How was it made? They need all this general knowledge to truly understand the product.

Of course, I work to bring students to their desired certification levels but I feel the most important achievement is that students truly learn, understand and know the products that I'm teaching. At the end of the day, I need well-trained people – not just people who were really good at passing their certification levels.

Certification is needed and is very important to validate knowledge. The goal is not to teach people how to answer questions but to configure things themselves, set up a FortiGate themselves, know where to find documentation, etc.

I focus on deep knowledge of the product as the foundation combined with interesting course delivery to help ensure certification.



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