NSE Training Institute

FCT SPOTLIGHT

A Conversation with Fortinet Certified Trainer and NSE 8: Russ Doucet, Chief Technology Officer at INSA

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.

Russ Doucet is Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at INSA, a Fortinet Premier Authorized Training Center. Russ became an FCT in 2004, when the program was first created. With over 25 years of IT and security experience, Russ has delivered cybersecurity training to hundreds of security professionals and his security expertise is sought after not only for training but for speaking engagements and expert testimony at Provincial and Superior Courts in Canada. Russ has multiple Fortinet technical and MVP awards and he was one of the first Fortinet Partners to receive NSE 8 Certification. We recently interviewed Russ and gathered his thoughts about the Fortinet NSE Training Institute programs, certifications and courses.

The Value of Fortinet Training

Why did you decide to become an FCT?

I have always believed in user training as a methodology to earn user trust, enable user success, and to reduce support burden as well as to broaden understanding of the platform to drive more adoption. Prior to the inception of the ATC program, I created and taught my own courses. When the team at Fortinet created the Fortinet Certified Network Security Professional (FCNSP) and the Fortinet Certified Network Security Administrator (FCNSA) certifications and began to create high-quality courseware, of course I added that to my practice. More recently, we have made extensive use of the NSE 5, NSE 6 and NSE 7 courses in our training offerings. The availability of so much high-quality courseware to be able to deliver to our user base is invaluable, and the responsiveness of the training team at Fortinet makes the decision really obvious. Even as more online offerings become free to users, the availability of quality skilled instructors and the value they bring in understanding their actual production environments is still understood and appreciated by our more advanced clients. The result is that demand for more frequent and more diverse courses increases as the deployment of Fortinet equipment broadens. The FCT structure enables instructors to provide continued enrichment to deliver increasing value to clients over time.

What are your Fortinet certifications? How do you maintain a high-level technical skill set?

My current Fortinet certifications include NSE 1 through level 8, as well as Fortinet Certified Trainer and Fast Track Instructor designations. The renewal structure of NSE 7 and NSE 8 makes the certifications relatively easy to maintain, but at the same time the ongoing availability of new product and new training gives (and demands) new opportunities to learn. Additionally, the size and scope of the projects we service within the Canadian Federal Government allows us to engage at a very high level with Fortinet Subject Matter Experts and Product Managers as well as a superb Sales Engineer team here in the National Capital Region of Canada, to continue to enrich our skillsets.

Which NSE courses are the most demanded by learners you train?

Probably our most frequently taught course is NSE 7 Enterprise Firewall followed by NSE 5 FortiAnalyzer and NSE 5 FortiManager. We plan to expand into new verticals and new markets. Training is always a central component of our value equation as we introduce ourselves to new customers.

How have you seen your students benefit from NSE training?

Based on a very high return rate for students, they are benefiting very well from it. I have many students that have accumulated weeks of time with me in the classroom (virtual or otherwise) over the years. When I run into them in their production worlds later on, it is clear to see that these individuals are regarded as the local expert in their technology, which for me offers the final proof. I celebrate their success in these cases.

What makes you successful as an FCT?

The ability to stand up and provide courses in a relatively short timeframe in response to customer demands and to apply the material to their production environment is what I believe makes us valuable to our clients. At the end of the day, having an instructor that believes strongly in the strength of the product comes through to the students – this is easy when the product is so capable. Training is in part about transfer of skills and knowledge, but ultimately, it's really the transfer of enthusiasm that makes for success once the class is completed.

What are Fortinet customers' expectations when they contact an Authorized Training Center in order to attend a Fortinet NSE Training?

The students have a high expectation for the quality of the courseware and the labs, which the Fortinet Training team has delivered consistently.

What is the value of Fortinet NSE Certification for INSA and your clients?

The expectations and demand for certifications varies between our key audiences. Ultimately, the high quality of the courseware and materials is the cornerstone of the program whether certification is pursued or not.

What's changing today with the COVID crisis in the Federal Canadian Government - in terms of training expectations?

First of all, it has been over a year since we were in a physical classroom. Transitioning to 100% online training has its pros and cons – attendance is good as travel expenses and complexities are now gone. We make a special effort to try to foster a more face-to-face style relationship in an online format. Some parts of the collaborative instruction process are a bit trickier and depend on the active participation of the individuals. We have been able to let class sizes drift upwards to around 15 attendees (all in response to demand, often last-minute) without causing negative impact to the online classroom experience. The other unusual effect is that attendance is far more consistent throughout the course when comparing an online course today vs an online course two years ago. As people are working from home, they are not being pulled out of their class into meetings or on calls as much; they seem to have better ability to control their day now that work-from-home is the norm.

What's the future for you as an FCT? What are your plans?

Significant expansion! We cannot keep up with demand, and are cross-training our SE team to help with instruction as well as recruiting new instructors. We plan to expand into new verticals as well as offer more public courses going forward.

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