

Jan Carroll

Fortify Institute



CONTACT DETAILS

T: 086 8613770

E: hello@fortifyinstitute.com

www.linkedin.com/company/fortifyinstitute/

W: www.fortifyinstitute.com



Jan Carroll pinpoints the cyberattack on the HSE in May 2021 as the moment at which corporate interest in cybersecurity peaked and made her realise the potential for a business in cybersecurity training.

A desire for greater professional flexibility prompted the cybersecurity expert to set up Fortify Institute, a cybersecurity training company offering on-demand and live courses for individuals and companies across Ireland, in February 2022.

"I signed a contract with UCD Professional Academy in March 2021 and then the HSE cyberattack happened in May. I was the busiest I'd ever been in June. This gave me the push to start the business. Now, I've the opportunity to work for myself and help people start or grow a career in cyber because there's a big gap in the market for cybersecurity training. Half the jobs are going unfilled," she says.

A former technology teacher and electrician, she admits that her path into the industry hinged somewhat serendipitously on her impulsive reaction to a friend's offhand enquiry.

"My friend asked, 'If you had your time again, what would you do?' I said, 'I'd go into cybersecurity.' That got me thinking and by the end of that week I'd signed up for a Master's degree in cybersecurity.' After a few years in the industry helping SMEs implement their cyber strategies, Jan could see the need for more training and more diversity (women) in the industry. This along with lockdown, gave her the nudge to setup Fortify Institute. Jan now delivers cybersecurity, ethical hacking and cloud security training to cyber professionals and SMEs.

A lifelong learner, Jan has recently embarked on a Professional Doctorate to focus on the cyber knowledge gap and lack of cyber resilience facing SMEs and in particular micro-SMEs. As a business owner herself, Jan understands the challenges and threats faced by small businesses and wants to build resources to help plug the gaps.

Jan hails the "fantastic" ACORNS programme for providing a ready-made support network for those starting their entrepreneurial journey. "We all support each other, whether that's moral support or as consumers. Some people are in marketing, website design, or career coaching. Each of us needed some of those skills at one point or another so we knew exactly who to engage with when we did," she says.

Providing early stage female entrepreneurs, living in rural Ireland, with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to meet and even exceed their current aspirations.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
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