

2026-04-11-SRE-S6-E04-with-Ricard-Bejarano 1.0

AUDIO

[00:00:00.00] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:05.39] JORDAN: Welcome to season 6 of the Prodcast, Google's podcast about site-reliability engineering and production software. Earlier this year, The Prodcast team recorded short sessions with participants at SREcon Americas 2026. Here's what we learned talking with people at the conference ...

[00:00:30.52] ROBOTIC VOICE: You missed a page from Telebot.

[00:00:33.22] JORDAN: Welcome to The Prodcast, Google's podcast, on site reliability engineering and software. And see, that time, I did it perfect. Thank you. We'll put applause in later. My name is Jordan and I have with me from Cisco--

[00:00:48.72] RICARD BEJARANO: My name is Ricard. I'm a lead site reliability engineer at Cisco's ThousandEyes, and we're here to talk about Homelab.

[00:00:54.70] JORDAN: Awesome. Yeah. So what would you call a person who is the SRE, but in their house.

[00:01:01.28] RICARD BEJARANO: Well, it's myself, so it's hard to say.

[00:01:03.32] JORDAN: Yeah, what would your title be?

[00:01:05.16] RICARD BEJARANO: Homelabber.

[00:01:06.04] JORDAN: Homelabber, OK.

[00:01:06.78] RICARD BEJARANO: I think that takes it all because it's all-- you own all the stack.

[00:01:10.18] JORDAN: Yeah.

[00:01:10.56] RICARD BEJARANO: So you could call yourself whatever you want. You can be the CEO.

[00:01:13.76] JORDAN: CEO sounds good. I'll take that one, too. So for anyone who doesn't have a home lab, why do they want one? And what can you do with them?

[00:01:22.76] RICARD BEJARANO: Well, for a lot of reasons, one of the main ones, which is what got me started, is just pure tinkering. So if you're the kind of people that-- or person that loves tinkering with computers, that loves building stuff, that wonders how does a website work, how does google.com translate to computers somewhere where I connect and I can modify my Excel sheet or Google Sheets. So if you're that kind of person that's driven by curiosity and learning about how computers work, that's one reason.

[00:01:53.34] Another reason is just learning in general and driving your career. There's a lot of people who are building resumes who are scaling what they do. They're basically growing professionally by practicing at home and then bringing that expertise at work.

[00:02:08.72] JORDAN: So tell me a little bit more about that, because some people think that Homelab is just like, I have a place I can store my pictures and I can send it to myself, or I want to host an email server because nothing could go wrong if you host your own email server. But a lot of people, especially who are in our audience, they have a lot of technical skills. What ones in particular might get upleveled if they practice tinkering with their Homelab?

[00:02:34.90] RICARD BEJARANO: Well, I learned Kubernetes through the topic. I'm giving a talk here at SRE-con this week.

[00:02:40.06] JORDAN: Wow.

[00:02:40.56] RICARD BEJARANO: Through Homelabbing, through running Kubernetes at home because I grew out of Docker at the time.

[00:02:45.68] JORDAN: No shade on Docker. Docker is great.

[00:02:47.64] RICARD BEJARANO: Docker's great, but Kubernetes is a more employable skill because it's more popular in the enterprise. So I took the decision to switch to Kubernetes, and that landed also jobs for me. So you can do all sorts of stuff professionally, but also on the side, one of the things around my Homelab is home assistant.

[00:03:03.02] JORDAN: Yeah.

[00:03:03.20] RICARD BEJARANO: And I have the whole home automated. I can watch the dogs remotely.

[00:03:08.08] JORDAN: This is the most important thing you can do with a home.

[00:03:10.24] RICARD BEJARANO: Right? So it's great. You can do that. You can host your own website if you want to take control of your public image and don't want to rely on social media, which comes and goes, or if you want to run a blog. I run my own blog posts, as well, and on my website, and that's where I link to everything. And I can post articles with the freedom that doing whatever you want gives you, because you don't depend on meeting anyone's rules or on anyone's uptime. You can also, if you think you can beat one of the big ones, you can perhaps do that, as well.

[00:03:40.10] And in the process, you'll learn a lot, all of these skills which are very much employable and which can boost your career.

[00:03:47.82] JORDAN: Yeah, definitely. I think there's a lot of different opportunities that people can use home labs for. For example, my family has a Dungeons & Dragons game, and we self-host the ability for everybody to connect to it because sometimes the service that we used to use isn't super reliable, or slow or whatever. And so while that could be just for fun and family stuff, but you could also make a career of doing that for other people. So there's a million different ways to get there.

[00:04:17.54] So if somebody was really interested in learning more about Homelabbing, where would they go?

[00:04:23.64] RICARD BEJARANO: Well, later in September, they will be able to buy my book. I'm writing a book on Homelabbing with O'Reilly. That's due to come out September. I'm halfway through writing it yet. But in the meantime, we're about to go with the early access. But in the meantime, you can go to the Homelab subreddit. That's a big community. It's probably the biggest one out there.

[00:04:41.10] JORDAN: Yeah.

[00:04:41.34] RICARD BEJARANO: There's plenty of YouTube channels that do Homelab content. I won't name names. You can just look it up. But there's plenty of them.

[00:04:47.82] JORDAN: Yeah.

[00:04:48.10] RICARD BEJARANO: And they're all growing, and they have very high quality content with detailed walkthroughs. It's not as scary as it might have been years ago.

[00:04:54.18] JORDAN: Yeah.

[00:04:54.58] RICARD BEJARANO: The walkthroughs and the documentation are slowly coming to a level where you don't even have to be a super expert, and it's not so much a hard topic.

[00:05:02.76] JORDAN: What's really interesting about Homelabbing is that it always has come from humble roots of like, oh, I had an old computer. What can I use it for? What can I use the parts for? And there are a lot of ways now that you can use any hardware and slap it into your Homelab, and just resurrect something that, instead of like in Toy Story where it was like, I don't want to play with you anymore. But now it's like, oh, that can have a new use again. And especially during a time when electronics and components are so expensive, it's a really good thing.

[00:05:34.54] RICARD BEJARANO: Oh, yeah.

[00:05:35.12] JORDAN: Should our Homelabbers always want to do that? Or are there platforms of hardware or software that are super helpful to them to start out?

[00:05:45.00] RICARD BEJARANO: Well, Docker and containerization engines in general have enabled the use of lower-end hardware, stuff you get found on a drawer that you had from a long time ago, or that you get used or refurbished for very cheap. This sort of container engines have made that very much possible because it doesn't have as much overhead as VMs had, which was an issue on the enterprise. But it also was a very big blocker at home because you needed a lot of machine to run just a couple of services. Now you can have a cheap Raspberry Pi or an old Intel NUC you got off the internet.

[00:06:18.60] Or my latest acquisition is a Mac Mini that I rescued used that had a broken Bluetooth board. And so the seller was selling it cheap because it wasn't useful for him anymore. And I don't need Bluetooth for my services, so now it's running my OpenClaw instance.

[00:06:32.08] JORDAN: Wow, yeah.

[00:06:33.52] RICARD BEJARANO: So yeah.

[00:06:34.12] JORDAN: That's amazing. Where can we find you on the internet?

[00:06:37.44] RICARD BEJARANO: Well, my website is bejarano.io, which is my surname dot io. And everything is there. The link to the book will be there once it's published. Right now, it points to a form. So if you have a Homelab, we're looking for real-world examples of Homelabs that might get featured on the book.

[00:06:52.24] JORDAN: Cool.

[00:06:52.36] RICARD BEJARANO: So if you want to take the chance and maybe get that opportunity to be on the first published book about Homelabbing, go take it.

[00:06:58.25] JORDAN: And what's the book called?

[00:07:00.24] RICARD BEJARANO: The book is The Homelab Handbook, which is the definitive guide to self-hosting.

[00:07:04.46] JORDAN: Awesome. Well, thank you very much. This has been the Prodcast. Have a great day.

[00:07:09.88] You've been listening to The Prodcast, Google's podcast on site reliability engineering. Visit us on the web at sre.google, where you can find books, papers, workshops, videos, and more about SRE. This season is brought to you by our hosts, Jordan Greenberg, Steve McGee, Florian Rathgeber, and Matt Siegler, with contributions from many SREs behind the scenes. The Prodcast is produced by Paul Guglielmino and Salim Verjee. The Prodcast theme is "Telebot" by Joey Beltran and Jordan Greenberg.

[00:07:43.14] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:07:44.08] ROBOTIC VOICE: You missed a page from Telebot.

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