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Europe 2026

#KubeCon #CloudNativeCon

Will it Kubernetes?

**A Tinkerer's Journey From Curiosity To Career –
Niklas Frick**

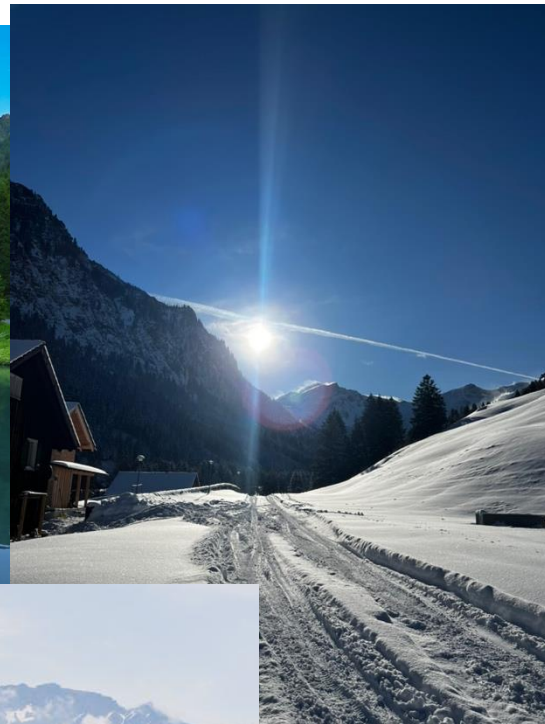
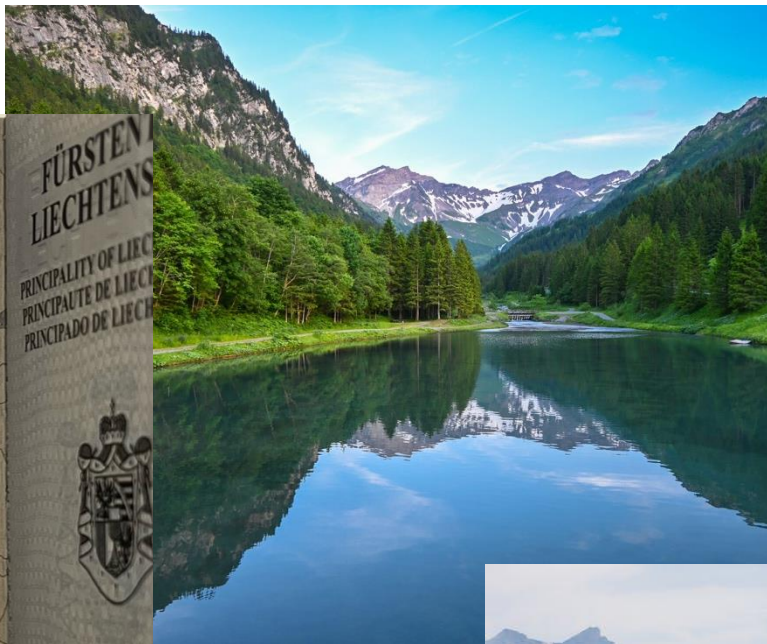


The All-Nighter









Who I am

- Apprenticeship in IT Systems Engineering at a bank (age 15-19)
- Degree in Digital Business Management
- ~8 years Solutions Architect & Product Manager





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The Pile



The Ethernet Adapter & Patch Cable Crisis



Where I Was Starting From





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Failing Forward



Obstacles Along the Way: One Example

- The Problem: Disabled memory cgroups on Raspberry Pi
- The Fix: `cgroup_memory=1 cgroup_enable=memory`

Biggest Headache

- Certificate & Tokens: How do I even join the nodes together?



Service Model



- Pets are given names like `pussinboots.cern.ch`
- They are unique, lovingly hand raised and cared for
- When they get ill, you nurse them back to health



- Cattle are given numbers like `vm0042.cern.ch`
- They are almost identical to other cattle
- When they get ill, you get another one

- Future application architectures should use Cattle but Pets with strong configuration management are viable and still needed

The «And Now What?» Moment

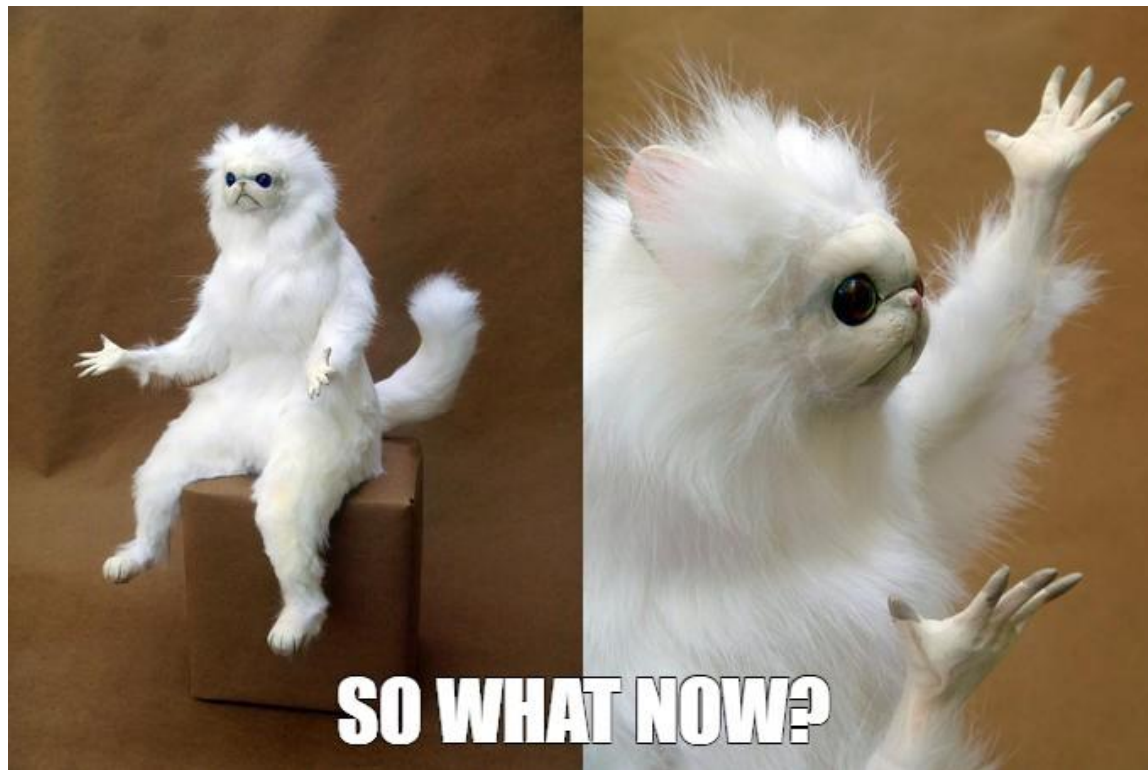


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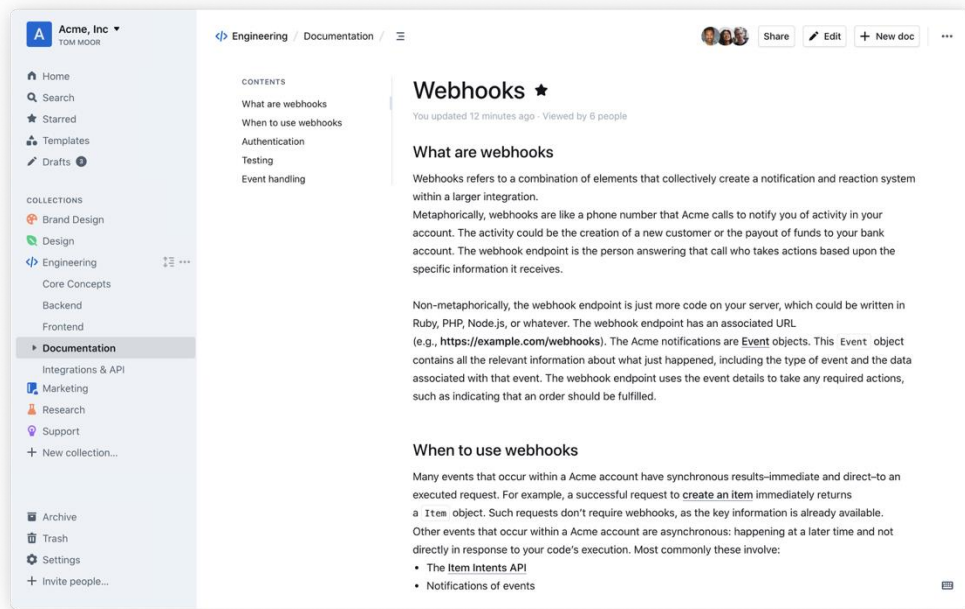
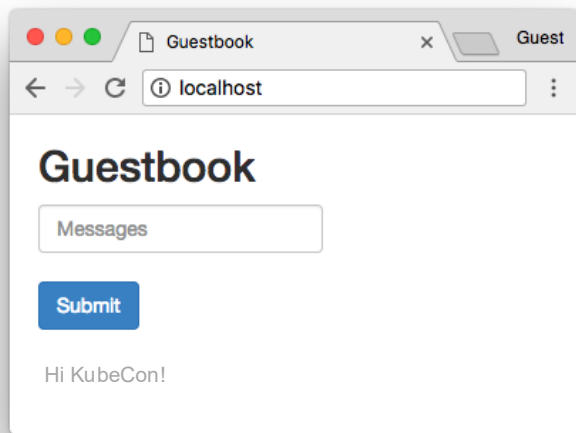
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The Snowball



Self-hosting



Self-hosting: Wiki/Notes App

- Data Persistence?
- kubectl apply all the way?
- Database & Caching needed?
- What's S3 anyways?
- I want external access?
- What about HTTPS?
- Monitoring?
- Automated deployments?



The Community





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From Homelab to «Production»



Homelab vs. Production: Honest Differences – What transfers

- Core Primitives
- Mental Models
- Declarative Mindset
- Troubleshooting instinct
- Infrastructure & Toolstack

Homelab vs. Production: Honest Differences – Different in «Prod»

- Architecture Planning
- Security: Compliance, RBAC, NetPol, Secrets Management...
- Multi-Tenancy
- Reliability (Blast Radius)
- Observability + Alerting (!!)
- Day-2-Ops
- Cost

Homelab vs. Production: Lessons that Don't Transfer

- Generalist → Platform builder
- Shiny → Stable
- Toy HA → Real HA

Homelab vs. Production

The ~~80/20~~ 60 / 40 Rule

The technical knowledge and TS skills
you need come from the homelab

People, processes, consequences,
regulations you'll get from production

Job Interviews



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Job Interviews: What Interviewers Will Probe For

- Scale Thinking: Reason about 50+ nodes, 200+ namespaces
- Team & Process: Handling of change management & pushback?
- Incident Mindset: What about SLOs, error budgets...?
- Security Posture: How to get compliant
- Platform-as-Product: How to build for other developers?

Job Interviews: How to Frame Your Homelab in Interviews

- **Be specific:** “I run a 3-node Talos cluster with ArgoCD GitOps and Longhorn for storage. During my last upgrade XYZ broke and I fixed it by...”
- **Lead out with why:** “I built a homelab to deeply understand the tools I’d recommend to clients.”
- **Bridge to Production:** “In my homelab I learned X, which taught me Y, whereas in prod I’d apply it as Z.”
- **Own the gaps:** “I haven’t managed 200 nodes, but I understand the failure modes and here’s how I’d approach it...”

Where I Am Now





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Your Turn



Starting out?



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- One laptop with k3s is enough
- Deploy something you WANT to use
- Join Communities
- Break things (on purpose)
- Brace yourself for «Production»

For the Senior Engineers in the Room



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Will YOU Kubernetes too?



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One last thing...





<https://guestpods.cloud>

Feedback & Connect

Talk Feedback:



Connect with me:

Niklas Frick

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/niklasfrick/>

GitHub: <https://github.com/niklasfrick>

E-Mail: niklas.frick@pm.me

Thank you for joining!