Good report, with interesting use of theory and thinker50 to analyse, interesting recommandations.
I like the seach for tensions : pro and cons
One improvement, make sure to define concepts such as Holocracy, navigator etc.
+ use that recommandations are justify from theory and concepts
(sometimes feel as a list)

MANAGEMENT DIAGNOSTIC REPORT

FREITAG

Planning • Leading • Structure • Controlling

COURSE
Management Course · 2026

PREPARED BY
Adrian Erath · Gwendolin Frimpong · Maria Buck

PROFESSOR
Bez

REPORT DATE
November 2nd 2026

Table of Contents

Introduction 3
1. Planning 3
1.1 Assessing FREITAG's purpose 3
1.2 Recommendations and implementation 4
2. Leading 5
2.1 Leading Practices 5
2.2 Degree of Empowerment 5
2.3 Recommendations for stronger empowerment 6
3. Structure 7
3.1 Organizational Structure of FREITAG 7
3.2 Analysis and Recommendations to the CEO 8
4. Controlling 9
4.1 Controlling Functions at FREITAG 9
4.2 Analysis and Recommendations to the CEO 11
5. Conclusion 13
References 15

.

Introduction

What happens when a company built around discarded materials becomes too successful to work like a traditional manufacturer? FREITAG offers an interesting answer. Its bags are recognizable because no two used truck tarps look exactly the same, but its business is not limited to making and selling bags. Repair, exchange, rental and work on circular materials raise a wider question: how can a company encourage people to consume differently while remaining commercially viable? At the same time, FREITAG relies on an organizational model that gives employees unusual independence. This makes the company an interesting case for a management diagnostic because the same freedom that encourages creative ideas can also make coordination and quality control more difficult.

Founded in Zurich in 1993, FREITAG is a Swiss company known for bags and accessories produced from used truck tarpaulins and other materials. It operates in the accessories and lifestyle market and combines physical products with circular services. The company has developed a form of self organization with roles and circles instead of relying only on traditional management positions. Its newer Navigator role adds strategic guidance to this decentralized way of working (FREITAG, n.d.-a; FREITAG, 2025b).

As a consulting team, we examine how FREITAG plans, leads, organizes and controls its activities. We first assess whether the statement presented on its website really explains its purpose. We then evaluate empowerment, organizational structure and the control process, using theories from management research. For each part, we identify both strengths and limits and propose changes that the CEO could realistically test. Our assessment is based on publicly available material. Where we cannot observe internal procedures or employee experiences, we distinguish this uncertainty from a demonstrated weakness.

1. Planning

1.1 Assessing FREITAG's purpose

As a first step in our analysis, we examine FREITAG's planning, specifically the purpose of the company. We consider purpose to be the starting point of a company's planning because it provides direction for management decisions and helps customers understand what the company stands for. A clear purpose can also help customers who identify with the company's values connect with the brand (Montgomery, 2019). To assess FREITAG's purpose, we use three questions: Who are we? What makes us distinctive? What do we exist to achieve? (Montgomery, 2012).

FREITAG describes itself on its About FREITAG page in two sentences: "FREITAG makes bags and accessories from used and, increasingly, circular materials. We think and act in cycles." (FREITAG, n.d.-a). The first sentence describes the brand and its products, while the second expresses the principle guiding its work. On a separate page titled Our Mission, the company explains that its activities began with reused truck tarpaulins and now aim to contribute to a circular economy that wastes fewer resources (FREITAG, n.d.-b). In its Impact Statements, FREITAG explicitly identifies "We think and act in cycles" as its purpose (FREITAG, 2025a). This distinction between the company's

brand description, mission, and official purpose is important when evaluating how clearly FREITAG communicates its identity and ambitions.

The first question, “Who are we?”, is not fully answered by the official purpose statement. Although it reflects FREITAG's commitment to circularity, it does not explain the company's business concept or the idea behind the brand. FREITAG is a Swiss company founded in Zurich in 1993, initially producing messenger bags from discarded truck tarpaulins. Today, bags and accessories remain its best-known products, but its activities extend beyond manufacturing. The company also develops materials and offers services such as repair, exchange, and rental. Customers can, for example, rent an F512 VOYAGER travel backpack instead of purchasing one. These activities demonstrate that FREITAG's business model involves not only producing goods but also extending their use and exploring alternative forms of consumption (FREITAG, n.d.-a).

The second question, “What makes us distinctive?”, is also not clearly addressed by the purpose statement. While “We think and act in cycles” communicates the importance of circularity, it does not explain how FREITAG puts this principle into practice. Its products are distinctive because used truck tarpaulins give each bag a unique appearance. In addition, repair and exchange services extend product use, while FREITAG RENT allows customers temporary access to a travel bag. Together, these activities show that the company aims to keep materials and products in circulation rather than simply selling new items. This combination makes FREITAG distinctive, but it is not directly communicated in the short purpose statement (FREITAG, n.d.-a).

The third question, “What do we exist to achieve?”, focuses on the company's reason for existing. The statement “We think and act in cycles” mainly describes how FREITAG operates rather than what it ultimately wants to achieve. Although it expresses a commitment to circularity, it is broad enough that other sustainable brands could make a similar claim. FREITAG's wider activities suggest a more specific ambition. By creating long-lasting products from used and increasingly circular materials, extending product life through repair and exchange, and offering rental services, the company aims to reduce the need for new resources and encourage more sustainable consumption. However, this broader ambition must be interpreted from the company's activities and additional information rather than being communicated directly through its purpose statement. A clear purpose should express the company's reason for existing so that employees and customers can understand it without having to draw these conclusions themselves.

Overall, FREITAG's purpose successfully communicates its commitment to circularity, but it does not fully explain the company's identity, distinctive activities, or broader ambitions. The company's business model provides strong examples of these elements, yet they are not sufficiently reflected in the official purpose statement.

1.2 Recommendations and implementation

FREITAG is a brand with a clear commitment to circular production and consumption, as demonstrated by its history, its services and its stated beliefs. However, the official purpose is too short to communicate this commitment clearly on its own. Our recommendation is to present the company, what makes it different and its reason for existing in two sentences. Proposed purpose:

"FREITAG creates durable bags and accessories from used and circular materials and keeps them in use through repair, exchange and rental. We exist to make circular consumption a practical part of everyday life and reduce the need for new resources."

This answers Montgomery's (2012) three questions while retaining the company's circular identity. It is our team's proposal, not an official statement from FREITAG.

According to Montgomery (2012), a clear purpose requires choices. This means that it cannot simply promise to do everything. But it also matters how the statement is developed, because not everyone at FREITAG may immediately agree with it. Sunita Sah (2025) describes how people sometimes remain silent when they feel pressure to comply, even when they have concerns. At FREITAG, where employees are expected to take responsibility, this could be an important risk. We therefore recommend presenting the draft purpose to people from design, production, stores and circular services and explicitly inviting criticism before adopting it. The company should explain which suggestions were accepted and why. This is not about encouraging disagreement in every situation. It is about making it safe to raise justified concerns while still arriving at a shared decision.

An additional way to handle disagreement is to treat it as a discussion about the decision rather than a personal conflict. For example, a store employee could question whether the proposed purpose represents the rental service, while production staff could raise concerns about the availability of circular materials. A structured discussion would allow these views to improve the wording before management makes a final choice. This is consistent with Sah's (2025) argument that speaking up can be learned and should not be confused with opposing every decision.

2. Leading

2.1 Leading Practices

FREITAG has a very different leadership style compared to a traditional company. Instead of a classic hierarchy, the company works with self-organization. According to FREITAG, the company changed its structure in 2016 and later adapted the holacratic model to fit its own needs. In 2025, operational leadership was handed over to Janine Weiz-Bühler for the role of "navigator". Her job is to give direction and support people rather than controlling them. This shows that leadership at FREITAG is mainly about enabling employees to work independently and take responsibility (FREITAG, 2025b). Another important part of FREITAG's management is its salary system. The company reduced its salary structure from 17 levels to 4 role-based levels and made the salary ranges transparent. It also introduced profit sharing based on EBIT. This does not directly describe empowerment, but it does help create fairness and clarity. Employees can better understand how pay works and how company success is connected to their own reward (Hornung, 2020).

2.2 Degree of Empowerment

If we look at FREITAG with Spreitzer's model of psychological empowerment, the company seems strong in the areas of self-determination and impact. Employees have real decision-making power

instead of only following orders. Their authority depends more on roles and expertise than on formal positions. The meaning dimension also seems strong because the company combines trust, responsibility, and participation. Psychological empowerment consists of four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995).

However, the competence dimension is less clear. Not every employee feels comfortable with the same amount of self-organization. Some employees may appreciate independence, while others may need more structure and guidance. This means that FREITAG provides strong conditions for empowerment, but the experience may differ from person to person (Fischer, 2017).

Empowering leadership involves sharing authority, offering information, and encouraging employee input (Lee et al., 2018). This helps distinguish having formal freedom from actually feeling empowered. Although FREITAG gives employees opportunities to make independent decisions, the available public sources do not show how all employees perceive them. Interviews or survey data would be necessary to assess their actual experience.

Employee motivation also depends on autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2009). FREITAG seems strong in autonomy, and its circular purpose can make work meaningful. However, employees also need sufficient training to develop mastery. This explains why empowerment is not automatically positive for every role or employee.

FREITAG's transparent salary levels and profit-sharing system linked to EBIT represent an unusual management practice. They may help employees understand how their work relates to shared results and support a sense of fairness and clarity. However, financial participation is not the same as psychological empowerment (Hornung, 2020).

2.3 Recommendations for stronger empowerment

FREITAG could improve the competence side of empowerment. Self organization works best when people still know what is expected from them. Daniel Pink (2009) argues that autonomy, mastery and purpose work together to support motivation. At FREITAG, autonomy is already important, but employees should also have enough opportunities to develop their skills. Regular feedback and clearer responsibilities could help. The new Navigator role is a good step because it can give direction without taking away autonomy. Another useful step would be to recognize independent work and make sure employees know that their ideas and effort are appreciated. In short, we recommend keeping FREITAG's supportive leadership style while offering more practical guidance where needed. This would make empowerment easier for employees who are not yet comfortable working independently.

We would therefore suggest a practical onboarding system in which more experienced circle members support colleagues during their first projects. Employees should be able to ask for guidance without losing decision making power. This combines Pink's (2009) ideas of autonomy, mastery and purpose. It is particularly useful when employees join a new role or face an unfamiliar task. For routine activities with strict quality requirements, clearer instructions may be more helpful than additional freedom.

3. Structure

3.1 Organizational Structure of FREITAG

FREITAG is a Swiss company that produces sustainable bags and accessories from used truck tarpaulins and other circular materials. Its organizational structure differs from that of a traditional company because it is largely based on self-organization and distributed responsibilities. In 2016, FREITAG introduced Holacracy to replace parts of its traditional hierarchy with a more flexible system of roles and circles. In 2025, the company introduced the Navigator role, held by Janine Weiz-Bihler, to provide clearer strategic direction. FREITAG can therefore be described as a hybrid organization that combines decentralized operational decisions with more coordinated strategic leadership (FREITAG, 2025b).

To analyze this structure, we use the five building blocks of organizational design: specialization, formalization, centralization, hierarchy, and coordination.

The first building block is specialization. At FREITAG, specialization can be considered medium to high because employees work in different functional areas, such as production, design, marketing, sustainability, and sales. Employees develop expertise in their respective fields while still collaborating across different circles. This supports efficiency and innovation, especially because FREITAG needs both creative product development and technical production knowledge.

The second building block is formalization. FREITAG has a medium level of formalization. Its self-organizing structure gives employees flexibility in how they organize their work, but roles and responsibilities are still defined. Furthermore, production requires standardized procedures to ensure product quality and safety. This shows that FREITAG combines flexibility with formal rules where they are necessary.

The third building block is centralization. FREITAG has a relatively low to medium level of centralization. Employees have decision-making authority within their roles, meaning that many operational decisions do not need to be approved by traditional managers. However, the Navigator role provides more centralized coordination for strategic matters. This combination allows the company to maintain employee autonomy while improving strategic direction.

The fourth building block is hierarchy. FREITAG has a relatively flat organizational structure with fewer traditional management levels. Authority depends more on roles, expertise, and responsibilities than on formal job titles. This can encourage employee participation and faster operational decisions. However, it also requires employees to understand their responsibilities clearly.

The final building block is coordination. Coordination is particularly important because FREITAG relies on different circles and teams working together. Communication, mutual adjustment, and shared organizational values help coordinate activities between departments. At the same time, standardized procedures remain essential in production, where quality and safety requirements must be respected.

FREITAG's structure can also be analyzed using Mintzberg's model of organizational configurations. The Navigator and strategic leadership represent the strategic apex, while traditional middle

management is relatively limited because authority is distributed across circles. The operating core includes employees involved in production, design, sales, and other daily activities. Specialists responsible for quality, processes, and sustainability standards can be associated with the technostructure, while HR, finance, IT, and administration represent support functions. Finally, FREITAG's commitment to sustainability and circularity forms a strong organizational ideology.

According to Mintzberg's framework, FREITAG is closest to an innovative organization, also known as an adhocracy. This is because the company emphasizes flexibility, collaboration, and innovation. However, its production activities also show characteristics of a machine bureaucracy, since standardized procedures are necessary to ensure consistent quality. Overall, FREITAG's organizational structure appears well adapted to its purpose. It supports creativity, sustainability, and employee responsibility while maintaining formal processes in areas where reliability and product quality are essential.

The five building blocks provide a useful description, but they do not fully show whether an organization gives people room to experiment. Hamel and Zanini (2020) argue that bureaucracy can restrict employee initiative and that organizations should create more room for people to contribute and test ideas. This is relevant for FREITAG because new circular materials and services require experimentation. At the same time, experimentation cannot replace clear safety procedures and quality standards in production. We therefore consider experimentation an additional dimension of FREITAG’s design rather than a reason to remove its existing controls.

3.2 Analysis and Recommendations to the CEO

FREITAG's organizational structure has several strengths, but also some potential weaknesses that should be considered.

One of its main strengths is employee autonomy. The self-organizing structure allows employees to take responsibility for their work and contribute their own ideas. This can increase motivation, creativity, and innovation. Flexible roles also make it easier for the company to adapt to changing circumstances. In addition, FREITAG's strong commitment to sustainability creates shared values that help employees work toward common objectives. These strengths are particularly important because FREITAG operates in a business where innovation and circular product development play a central role. Employees need enough freedom to develop new ideas, experiment with materials, and find more sustainable solutions.

However, a decentralized structure can also create difficulties. When responsibilities are distributed across several circles, it may not always be clear who is responsible for a specific decision. Coordination between different teams can become complicated, especially when projects involve production, design, marketing, and sustainability at the same time. Furthermore, decisions may take longer when many employees need to be consulted. Conflicts can also arise when different departments have different priorities.

We therefore recommend that FREITAG maintain its self-organizing structure but improve coordination between circles. Rather than introducing more traditional hierarchy, the company could assign a clearly responsible project coordinator to important cross-functional projects.

For example, when FREITAG develops a new recyclable bag, one project coordinator could ensure communication between design, production, marketing, and sustainability teams. This person would not replace the autonomy of the different circles but would make sure that responsibilities, deadlines, and objectives are clear.

This approach could improve accountability and communication without changing the company's organizational culture. It would also complement the Navigator role by connecting strategic priorities with operational activities.

However, implementation would require careful consideration. Employees should continue to have freedom within their roles, and project coordinators should support collaboration rather than control every decision. The company should also clearly communicate the responsibilities of each person to avoid creating confusion or unnecessary bureaucracy.

We suggest testing this coordination approach in one innovation project before applying it more widely. Employee feedback could then be used to evaluate whether the new approach improves communication and efficiency.

Our recommendation also reflects the argument of Hamel and Zanini (2020) that organizations should reduce unnecessary bureaucracy without removing responsibility. A coordinator should not become another approval level. The role should make decisions visible, connect people and help a project move forward. Alex Budak (2022) argues that people can initiate change without formal authority. FREITAG could use this idea by inviting employees from different circles to propose small tests for material reuse, supported by a coordinator who helps them turn proposals into measurable experiments. This approach is most suitable for innovation projects, not for activities where safety standards leave little room for variation.

To put this into practice, the CEO could first select one project involving production, design and circular services. The project team would agree on a coordinator, decision responsibilities, a short review date and two success criteria, such as fewer unresolved cross circle decisions and faster responses to material constraints. After the trial, employees would decide whether to keep or change the arrangement. This would limit organizational resistance because the change is reversible and does not redistribute authority permanently. It would not be appropriate to treat a coordinator as a substitute for mandatory quality approvals.

4. Controlling

4.1 Controlling Functions at FREITAG

Controlling is an important management function because it helps companies ensure that their activities and results are aligned with their objectives. According to management control theory, the controlling process consists of setting performance standards, measuring actual results, comparing them with the expected results, and taking corrective action when necessary.

At FREITAG, controlling is particularly important because the company combines economic objectives with sustainability, product quality, and circularity. Since FREITAG produces bags and

accessories from used truck tarpaulins and other recycled materials, the company needs to ensure that its production processes are efficient, its products meet quality requirements, and its environmental activities support its long-term objectives.

To analyze FREITAG's controlling practices, three types of control can be distinguished: feed-forward control, concurrent control, and feedback control.

Feed-forward control focuses on preventing problems before they occur. At FREITAG, this type of control can be observed in the selection and testing of materials before production begins. The company tests used truck tarpaulins for potentially harmful substances before processing them into bags. This helps ensure that the materials are suitable for production and meet safety requirements. FREITAG also requires its production partners to follow a Code of Conduct that establishes expectations concerning working conditions, environmental responsibility, and collaboration (FREITAG, n.d.-a).

These practices are particularly important because FREITAG does not work with standardized new materials. Instead, it uses second-hand materials that differ in condition and quality. Preventive controls therefore help reduce the risk of production problems and protect the company's reputation.

Concurrent control takes place while activities are being performed. Its objective is to identify problems during operations and ensure that processes follow the company's standards. FREITAG's production process includes sorting, washing, cutting, and sewing used truck tarpaulins. During these activities, material requirements and production procedures help maintain product quality and resource efficiency.

For example, cutting templates help employees use the available truck tarpaulin material while preserving the unique design of each bag. This illustrates how production procedures can support both quality requirements and FREITAG's circular business model (FREITAG, n.d.-a).

Feedback control involves evaluating results after activities have been completed. It allows a company to identify deviations and determine whether improvements are necessary. At FREITAG, finished bags undergo quality inspections in Zurich before they are sold. This helps identify possible defects and ensures that products meet the company's quality expectations.

FREITAG also uses environmental reporting to evaluate its sustainability performance. According to its 2025 Impact Statements, the company reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 24.8% compared with 2024, reaching 2,037 tonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions across Scopes 1–3 (FREITAG, 2025a).

However, measuring results does not automatically mean that the entire control process is effective. A complete control cycle requires comparing actual performance with defined standards and taking corrective action when necessary. Public information provides evidence of FREITAG's performance measurement, but does not fully explain how individual circles use these results to make corrective decisions. This is a limitation of the available information rather than evidence that such procedures are missing.

Financial controlling is another important part of organizational performance. It helps companies monitor financial results, manage costs, and evaluate whether business activities are economically sustainable.

FREITAG's remuneration system provides an example of how financial performance is connected to employees. The company introduced a transparent salary structure with four role-based salary levels and a profit-sharing system linked to EBIT, meaning earnings before interest and taxes. This connects part of employee compensation to company performance and makes financial success relevant to employees (Hornung, 2020). However, detailed information about FREITAG's internal budgets, cost-control procedures, and financial performance indicators is not publicly available. Therefore, it is not possible to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its financial controlling system.

Environmental and operational performance are more visible through FREITAG's Impact Statements. For example, the company reported that approximately 40% of the tested and dismantled truck tarpaulin material became cutting waste in 2025 because of its quality and design requirements (FREITAG, 2025a). This figure illustrates the challenge of balancing product quality with efficient material use. However, without an appropriate benchmark, it does not necessarily indicate inefficient production.

Management theory also distinguishes between control by domination and self-control. Control by domination is based on formal rules, supervision, and authority, while self-control emphasizes individual responsibility, autonomy, and commitment to shared objectives.

FREITAG appears to combine both approaches. Formal control is visible in its quality standards, production requirements, and Code of Conduct, while its self-organizing structure encourages employees to take responsibility for their decisions. This combination allows the company to maintain operational standards without relying exclusively on traditional hierarchical supervision.

Effective self-control nevertheless requires clear responsibilities, access to relevant information, and opportunities for feedback. Controlling at FREITAG must therefore support both reliable operational standards and employee independence.

4.2 Analysis and Recommendations to the CEO

FREITAG's controlling processes demonstrate several strengths, particularly in quality management, sustainability monitoring, and the connection between employee responsibility and organizational performance. However, some potential weaknesses should also be considered.

One of the company's main strengths is its focus on quality control. FREITAG checks materials before production and inspects finished products before they reach customers. This is particularly important because its products are manufactured from second-hand materials that differ in condition and appearance. These controls help protect product durability and the company's reputation.

Another strength is the measurement of environmental performance. FREITAG publishes information about greenhouse gas emissions, material efficiency, and resource consumption. This makes it possible to evaluate progress over time. The reported reduction in emissions between 2024 and 2025 demonstrates measurable environmental improvement (FREITAG, 2025a).

A further strength is the relationship between controlling and employee autonomy. FREITAG's self-organizing structure encourages employees to take responsibility for their work. Instead of relying entirely on traditional supervision, the company can use shared values and individual responsibility to support its objectives.

Nevertheless, some challenges deserve attention. One is the complexity of managing material efficiency while maintaining consistent product quality. The reported proportion of cutting waste illustrates this trade-off, although it does not establish how much waste could realistically be avoided.

Another potential challenge is the coordination of controlling activities across different circles. FREITAG's decentralized structure gives employees considerable independence. This could make it more difficult to ensure that teams use compatible performance indicators and understand who is responsible for corrective decisions. However, the available public sources do not establish that FREITAG currently experiences these coordination problems.

There is also a risk of focusing too strongly on quantitative performance indicators. Financial results, environmental targets, and production efficiency are important, but creativity, employee motivation, and collaboration are also essential for a company such as FREITAG. These aspects are more difficult to measure and could receive less attention if controlling focuses mainly on numerical results.

Based on this analysis, we recommend that FREITAG introduce a more coordinated performance measurement approach across its different circles. Instead of creating a traditional controlling hierarchy, each circle could define a small number of relevant indicators connected to the company's overall objectives.

For example, production teams could monitor material waste, product defects, and resource efficiency, while design teams could evaluate product durability, repairability, and innovation. These indicators could then be discussed regularly between circles to identify problems and share improvements. This would allow employees to remain responsible for their own activities while making performance information easier to use across the organization.

We also recommend regular feedback discussions that combine quantitative and qualitative information. Employees should not only discuss whether targets have been achieved, but also what can be learned from successes and mistakes. An environment in which employees feel safe to raise concerns and discuss mistakes can support learning and continuous improvement (Edmondson, 1999).

At FREITAG, this could help employees address production difficulties, quality issues, and coordination problems without fear of negative consequences. However, performance measurement should also lead to corrective action. We therefore recommend testing the proposed approach in one cross-functional production or sustainability project before implementing it throughout the organization.

For example, because FREITAG reported a relatively high proportion of cutting waste, the company could involve production and design employees in examining how more material could be reused without reducing product quality. Possible improvements could include adapting cutting methods,

developing smaller products from leftover materials, or reconsidering design requirements where appropriate.

The project team could first establish the current level of material waste and agree on a realistic improvement target. After testing a proposed change, it would compare the results with the initial measurements and decide whether further adjustments are necessary. Product quality should remain an essential criterion to ensure that reducing waste does not lead to lower durability.

This approach would follow the control cycle by connecting standards, measurement, evaluation, and corrective action. It would also allow employees to question targets when they create unintended consequences for product quality or working conditions. Encouraging employees to raise concerns and initiate improvements can support organizational learning without requiring additional hierarchical authority (Sah, 2025; Budak, 2022).

To evaluate the pilot project, FREITAG could compare material waste before and after the test, monitor whether product quality remains stable, and gather employee feedback on coordination and decision-making. These results would help determine whether the approach should be maintained, adjusted, or extended to other circles.

However, implementation should remain simple. Excessive reporting, rigid targets, or additional approval procedures could weaken the flexibility and autonomy that characterize FREITAG's organizational model. The purpose of the pilot should therefore be to improve learning and decision-making rather than increase supervision.

5. Conclusion

FREITAG demonstrates that a sustainability-oriented company can combine a distinctive business model with high employee autonomy and a serious commitment to product quality. Its practices reinforce one another: circular production establishes the operational priorities, self-organization gives employees space to act, and quality and environmental controls help protect the brand’s promise. At the same time, the analysis shows that autonomy alone does not guarantee clarity or consistent performance.

Our position is that FREITAG should preserve its self-organizing model rather than return to a traditional command-and-control hierarchy. The more valuable improvement is to make this model easier to navigate. A more explicit purpose would connect the brand’s circular practices to its reason for existing. Structured onboarding, useful feedback, and clearer expectations would make empowerment accessible to more employees. For cross-functional initiatives, a designated coordinator could clarify responsibilities while leaving decisions within the circles. Finally, a small set of shared indicators could help employees connect operational outcomes with broader sustainability and business objectives.

These changes should be introduced carefully. Excessive reporting, rigid targets, or coordinators acting as supervisors could weaken the flexibility that FREITAG depends on. We therefore recommend testing the proposed coordination and performance practices in a single cross-functional

project, gathering employee feedback, and evaluating whether communication, material efficiency, and decision-making improve before extending them more widely.

Ultimately, FREITAG does not need more control for its own sake. It needs better alignment between its purpose, people, structure, and performance information. By strengthening that alignment while protecting employee responsibility, FREITAG can make its management approach more effective and sustain the values that define its brand.

References

Budak, A. (2022). Becoming a changemaker: An actionable, inclusive guide to leading positive change at any level. Balance.

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350–383.

Fischer, A. (2017). So arbeitet Freitag. HR Today. https://www.hrtoday.ch/de/article/so-arbeitet-freitag

FREITAG. (n.d.-a). About FREITAG. https://freitag.ch/en_US/mission/about-freitag

FREITAG. (n.d.-b). Our mission. https://freitag.ch/en_US/mission

FREITAG. (n.d.-c). Production. https://freitag.ch/en_FI/mission/operations/production

FREITAG. (2025a). Impact Statements 2025. https://freitag.ch/en_US/mission/impact-statements

FREITAG. (2025b). Media release: Operational leadership change. https://freitag.ch/ja_US/media/about/navigator

Hamel, G., & Zanini, M. (2020). Humanocracy: Creating organizations as amazing as the people inside them. Harvard Business Review Press.

Hornung, S. (2020, July 1). FREITAG: We have radically simplified our salary scales. Corporate Rebels. https://www.corporate-rebels.com/blog/freitag-we-have-radically-simplified-our-salary-scales

Lee, A., Willis, S., & Tian, A. W. (2018). Empowering leadership: A meta-analytic examination of incremental contribution, mediation, and moderation. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 39(3), 306–325.

Montgomery, C. A. (2012). The strategist: Be the leader your business needs. HarperBusiness.

Montgomery, C. A. (2019, March 11). Strategy and the purpose driven leader [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v-VsWPKj_g

Pink, D. H. (2009). Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us. Riverhead Books.

Sah, S. (2025). Defy: The power of no in a world that demands yes. One World.

Spreitzer, G. M. (1995). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. Academy of Management Journal, 38(5), 1442–1465.

Declaration of AI Use

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used solely to assist with the linguistic revision of the report, particularly regarding grammar, sentence structure, and clarity of expression. The research, analysis, and recommendations were independently developed by the authors.