

Freelance or GmbH?

A Solo Tech Founder's Story



TECHTELMECHTEL 

Lukas Rieder · Techtelmechtel Talks #1 · Berlin · 22 September 2026

Cross out tech.
Cross out founder.
Cross out solo.

The useful question is shared: how do you choose your own path?

BERLIN, 2007

€250

A PowerBook G4, a place to stay, and a naive calculation of one hundred days of runway.

Support made the move possible. The story was never solo.

The company failed. The commitment still taught me.

Ambition is insufficient

A large idea does not supply the missing execution.

Investment has a cost

Finding the right investor can be as hard as organic growth.

My can-do attitude met existential fear.

Could I continue to support myself and my family when a contract ended?

Freedom transfers risk. Your present life has to be able to carry it.

A CHECK-IN

I can absorb mistakes

Commit, adapt, learn, and accept that the original plan may fail.

I am not fine right now

Choose support and stability.
Employment can be the responsible structure.

Do not stubbornly chase an idea of freedom.

THE BIGGEST LIE

"Solo"

A chance conversation at Kyiv airport led to Andrea, HiBase, larger projects, and a partner I trust.

People, not a legal form, made the work possible.

**Client work pays now.
A scalable business pays later,
perhaps.**

High pay and immediate satisfaction repeatedly pulled attention away from product development and sales.

WHY A COMPANY STRUCTURE?

Separate risks

Keep operating contracts away from accumulated long-term capital.

Create runway

Pay a stable salary while managing company cash deliberately.

Hold participations

Give HiBase and Parlant clear places in one structure.

Reduce access

Make retirement capital harder for me to spend impulsively.

ONE ECONOMIC BASE

Einzelunternehmen

Personal business with
Gewerbesteuer.

Freiberufler

Qualifying activity
without
Gewerbesteuer.

Direct GmbH

Salary,
company tax,
retained
corporate
wealth.

Holding + OpCo

Two entities,
separation,
and
additional
cost.

Start every path with the same economic business profit.

More gross company wealth does not equal the same private retirement income.

At €150,000 annual profit, recurring entity costs make the lifetime difference smaller than the slogan suggests. The Holding does not automatically win.

REPLACE THE THRESHOLD

```
investable surplus = economic profit -  
operating costs - private needs - tax -  
administration - runway
```

Then ask how long the surplus can remain invested and test a bad year.

CHOOSE FOR CONCRETE REASONS

- Liability has outgrown your personal safety margin.
- The business can retain meaningful surplus for long enough.
- A product or participation has transferable value.
- You accept the fixed cost, reduced access, and formal duties.

ONE ACTION

Trust yourself enough to inspect the choice.

Change one assumption until the ranking moves. Then take that assumption to a German tax adviser.

lukasrieder.com/freelance-or-company/