

A Rod Serling voice—over intones:

Submitted for your consideration. An overworked tailor, making fine clothes for the Royal Family. He's overworked and tired. He wants to do better. He's not quite sure what to do. He's trapped in the dark and foggy "Nit-Wit Zone" in this little fairy-tale diversion called

Software Design is a Good Thing

Once upon a time, in an imaginary land not that far away, and not that long ago, the Royal Tailor, Taylor ("Let us handle your soft wear"), had been hard at work again making a new outfit for the King. This time the King was to wear the clothes to an important meeting with a visiting dignitary. Much of the future of the Royal Kingdom hinged on this meeting, so the new clothes were critical. The King must make a good impression with the dignitary. All preparations were nearing completion, and the new Royal Outfit was just about done. Taylor the Royal Tailor was about done in himself.

It had been a long while since Taylor the Royal Tailor had been on a vacation, or had even been able to tend his garden. Weeds had overgrown the various vegetables that had once been planted with great hope for a variety in those so very uniform evening meals taken alone in the Royal Tailor Shoppe. A vacation to the bordering Royal-hood had been long planned, but not taken. "Just one more order for the King, and I'll take some time off." Taylor's wife was unimpressed. She'd heard that line before.

"Why don't you hire more help?" she asked.

Taylor the tailor replied that he would like to hire more help, but that he wouldn't be able to show them how to make all the different clothes. "I just have time to sew an outfit for the King or Queen, and then some other set of clothes is ordered. I just can't keep up with these projects, and don't have time to get someone else ready to help me."

"You need a new method" the wife pointed out.

"New method! New method! I need 2 more hands!" yelled Taylor, out of fatigue. "Er, sorry for that outburst, darling," Taylor apologized. "I'm just about finished with the King's outfit for tomorrow's important meeting. I'm just tired."

"Well, try to rest up after that," encouraged his wife.

"I can't," replied Taylor the tailor, "the Queen is going on a boondog—, er, good-will tour, and needs several new outfits. I'll be busy for quite some time."

Meanwhile, in the King's Royal Throne room, away from those whining peasants with all their complaints, Sir Lancet had just returned from another outing with the Royal Knights. This was a sterling, top-notch, crack tiger-team of Knights, ready for any problem that arose in the Kingdom. Any problem that could be solved by force, that is. Well, any problem that wasn't too big to be solved by the small, cracked team of Knights. Indeed, any problem that had been encountered before by that fine bunch of guys. Royal Teamwork was great. And the coffee was good, too.

"How did your latest mission go, Sir Lancet?" demanded the King.

"Well, your Majesty's Royal Knights encountered the Dragon of Complexity," replied Lancet.

"AWK!! What happened?"

"We just about had him, your Royal Highness. That is, we spotted him roaming among the peasants. Really caused them to scatter, that Dragon did. I aimed my Royal Silver-Tipped Spear at him, and threw with all my Royal Knight might. But it bounced off the Dragon, unharmed. I mean, the Dragon was unharmed, but just look at my Royal Silver-Tipped Spear. Bent!"

“Ouch! You poked me! Watch where you’re pointing that thing! I’m not a Dragon. Now, just look at what you’ve done. Slit my Royal Robe. Put that spear away, and get Taylor the tailor to fix up this sleeve. And have your band of Royal Knights get prepared for your next outing. You’re going after the Lizard of Contracts, specs and all!”

Taylor the tailor arrived quickly in the King’s throne room to see why he had been summoned so urgently. “I need my Royal Robe repaired. Just look at my sleeve,” fussed the King.

Taylor responded that it was going to take some time to repair the robe, since he didn’t have spare sleeves lying around the Royal Tailor Shoppe. A new sleeve would have to be made from scratch out of materials on-hand. The old sleeve would have to be extracted from the robe, examined as to its previous construction, and then the new sleeve made and added, but not seamlessly. The robe would look as good as new, at least when standing a few feet away, which was as close as most folks needed (or wanted) to get anyway.

Taylor the tailor took the tattered sleeve back to the shoppe for repairs, just as soon as the new outfit was finished for that previously mentioned important meeting with the visiting dignitary. Taylor just hoped the King wouldn’t want to wear the damaged robe to any Royal Festivities until Taylor had time to finish work on it.

Several hours and numerous stitches later, Taylor the tailor was finally able to start work on the slit sleeve. It didn’t look too hard to replace. It was a fairly standard sleeve, and yet, it did have a wrinkle or two that were unusual. Taylor had expected problems, but they could be ironed out. There was no time to order new material, so Taylor rummaged around to see what kind of scraps he had. Fortunately, there was a piece large enough to work, but there was only one chance to get it right. No, that wasn’t right. Taylor remembered that this was the left sleeve. There was no margin for error.

A couple of hours later the sleeve was finished, and in just a few minutes the sleeve would be back in place on the Royal Robe. A fine job, Taylor thought, if the King liked it. The King was fairly particular, and Taylor hoped the King liked the fit of the sleeve, not too tight or too loose, but time would tell. Now to start work on the Queen’s new set of clothes.

In order for Taylor the tailor to keep up with the demand for clothes, he bought material in bulk from the itinerant material merchants who were always showing up at the Royal Castle Door. Most of the time, Taylor got a good deal, and was able to use the material. Unfortunately, if a particularly fine piece of material was obtained, Taylor couldn’t count on any more of it, because the material merchants, being as itinerant as they were, couldn’t be relied upon to return again anytime soon, and certainly not with the highly desired stuff. Fortunately, the shoddy fly-by-night (actually trudge-through-the-soggy-muddy-forests-by-night) merchants rarely returned. But there were so many of them.

Taylor the tailor was a great tailor. He could take material stored in the Royal Material Room, cut it just so, and piece it together into a wonderful robe, gown, shirt, pants, or whatever the Royal Family needed. Taylor had been doing this long enough that he knew the sizes of each of the members of the Royal Family, and could start work on some new Royal Outfit without having to get all the details about what was needed. Sure, there were some false starts, but partly sewn clothes could be saved for another time, or undone some to adjust to circumstances (such as the King after a week-long feast of one kind or another). But, all-in-all, things went well and Taylor the tailor kept very busy.

But Taylor knew things had to change. He wasn’t getting any younger, and the King wasn’t getting any thinner, and new clothes were always on order. He knew his wife was right; he needed a new way, a new method of getting these clothes done quicker and with less adjustment. If only he had time to think about these things.

One day while relaxing in the bath, Taylor was reading the latest issue of “The Tailor Times (bi-monthly)”. He noticed an article on recent developments in tailoring theory. That stuff sure looked good, if it really worked as promised. Machines to do cutting and machines to do sewing. Material organizers so you didn’t have to rummage around piles of stuff in the old Royal Material Room. Messenger-order material from

material manufacturers, to special-order just the right stuff for important Royal Occasions. And, behold, tailors were actually making permanent drawings of their products so they could record what they had done. This would allow them to reuse old clothing patterns to make new items even easier and faster than the first time. And, they could, wonder of wonders, share designs with other tailors. Some folks had even taken steps to make these designs adaptable to customers of different sizes!

Now these new ideas were really something, if they worked, which Taylor doubted. After all, Royal Tailors such as Taylor had been successfully making good clothes for years. And the learned tailors working on these new ideas didn't actually have to create clothes to be worn by Kings and such. These tailors did try out their new ideas, of course, but by making clothes for dolls. Still, there was promise with these new methods.

There were also hurdles, naturally. Most tailors would have to start using these 'patterns' to standardize their work, and these patterns would have to be shared with others. Some tailors would be reluctant to share their special designs. And just the thought of these new methods would put off some tailors, since it wasn't clear what the benefits were. After all, tailors had been doing quite well for a long time with the old methods. Getting used to the new process would take time. Uniform notations, tools, and all that would need to be developed.

Then there was the problem of getting Kings and others of their ilk to wear clothes produced with the new process. What King is going to want to be the first to wear clothes that look a lot like another King's? It might not go well at those annual Royal Kingdom Fairs where the latest in Royal Products are displayed and compared. Kings would have to get used to standardized clothing, perhaps spiced up with individual touches.

Additionally, time would be needed by the tailors to record clothing designs. This might initially increase the cost of clothing, since some extra time would be spent on activities not directly related to the making of clothes. So some decrease in production rates would have to be expected. But in the long run, many clothes could be made from the same pattern, thus saving time in clothing design and the cost of the tailor's time in developing ideas for new clothes.

One exciting possibility with these new tailored patterns was having various tailors or apprentices work on the same item of clothing. Taylor the tailor realized that with patterns, different clothing parts could be assigned to other tailors. These tailors didn't even have to be in the same shoppe, or even in the same Kingdom! And the resulting pieces could be stitched together later in one tailor's shoppe. Tailors could specialize in clothing parts, doing nothing but different kinds of sleeves or collars, or special trim, for example. Sleeves or collars or trim could be made ahead of time and ordered by other tailors for the particular item of clothing that they were making. A whole industry could be built on more or less standard clothing parts, arriving just in time for Taylor's latest order from the King.

All this speculation came to an abrupt end. "Taylor!" shouted the Queen, "How much progress have you made on my new Royal Wardrobe for the good-will tour?"

Moral: The Emperor does have clothes, fine clothes in fact. Fine clothes until Taylor the tailor keels over from too many orders.

Moral: Soft wear design is a good thing, Taylor the tailor realized. Now if he could just get the King to let him try these new ideas. His friend, Will'm, in Royal Machinery ("If you've got the iron, we've got the bits"), might also be able to make some changes.

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