blue is the new black

The 10 Step Guide to Developing and Producing a Fashion Collection
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FOREWORD
by Mariëtte Hoitink

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This book is an absolute must-read for everyone working in fashion or with ambitions to do so. In my daily work as the managing director of HTNK – the Amsterdam based premier fashion recruitment & consultancy agency – I get applications from people all over the world who want to make it big in fashion. Ever since the start of the ‘Next Designer’ or ‘Models’ television shows, a lot of people discovered their own inner designer star within themselves. In the eyes of the general public, fashion appears to be equivalent to glamour, but what a lot of people don’t know is that this may well be the most intensive, life-consuming, demanding business there is. As a result, the fashion business is filled with people with extreme persistence, vision and talent, and therefore, it is indeed a lot of fun to work in, but definitely not for the reasons most people may think.

This book presents a practical overview, basic but detailed, of the heart of every fashion company: development and production. These are in most cases the teams that work together most intensively with all other departments – from design to legal, sales and marketing. This obviously makes this book a Bible for everyone with ambitions for careers in the buying, product development, and of course, production area. But they are not the only ones for whom this is relevant; for all those fashion professionals who work in design, marketing, sales, CSR, legal and financial departments, this book will provide some insight into why they occasionally find their production colleagues reaching their boiling points, running through corridors screaming and banging their heads against walls. Now they will know that the moment has come to hand
over that chocolate bar, bring some good coffee and take that head massage thingy out of its drawer. Your colleagues need you now.

Considering all the ‘Green is the new black’ slogans people keep throwing around nowadays, this book can create an understanding, a deeper awareness of where clothing comes from. I would like to believe that if people knew more about where exactly garments come from and how much effort and work has been put into their creation, they will treat them differently. From that perspective, I would highly recommend the general reader curious about clothes to give this book a go as well.

So, why is this book this relevant for such a large group of people? Because it hasn’t existed before. Fashion is an industry that really lacks the documented methodology found in many other industries. This is so in spite of the fact that clothing is a basic need; people all over the world deal with clothing every day and the industry has a significant influence on several countries’ economies, environments and everyday life. I think, therefore, it is our job to invest in this industry’s innovations that will turn the negative aspects of this business into positive ones. Innovation can only exist when information and methods are shared and discussed. Therefore, I’m very honoured to have met this most dedicated and talented fashion professional, Susie Breuer, who found the courage and extreme persistence to document this whole process, the core of every fashion company, whilst continuing to carry on her demanding job as a consultant for one of the most high end – and demanding – designer labels in the world. Huge respect.

Congrats,

Mariëtte Hoitink,
HTNK Fashion recruitment & consultancy

www.htnk.nl
Fashion is a multi billion-dollar industry. It is not just about sketching an outfit, it is about selecting fabric, developing buttons, sourcing a factory, negotiating prices, making patterns, seeing to the final launch, and selling garments. It is a multi-faceted industry that is exciting, enigmatic and endless.

With many fashion schools now recognising the importance of including technical modules to their degrees, this guide is the perfect accompaniment to the relevant modules with its vocational A to Z approach of what happens in the workplace, including how to build and maintain key business relationships.

People who buy *Blue is the New Black* want to know how to create a collection. They want to roll up their sleeves and do it, but they need practical instruction on the different stages. They don't want to read about data management systems or new thread developments; they want to understand what a range plan is and how to review a prototype with a factory.

Written for fashion graduates, fledgling entrepreneurs or those in entry level positions within the industry, this book demystifies the process of how to make a fashion collection, making it accessible for all levels. It is a reference guide, a buddy, and a Bible of who, what and where.
Chapter 1: The Workings of the Fashion Industry
Chapter 1: The Workings of the Fashion Industry

This book is written specifically to deal with the functions and responsibilities of the developer and the production coordinator. It is aimed at anyone who wants to break in to the industry in these roles, but also for those currently working for a brand, whether alone or in a team. The roles of the developer and the production coordinator are fundamental to the creation of any collection as they work closely alongside every team in the brand, ensuring that the collection is created, priced, constructed and delivered at the right time and to the right place.

THE ROLE OF THE DEVELOPER/PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

If you are a developer or a production coordinator you usually need to anticipate problems and have the solutions ready before they arise, and to be that problem solver, you need you need to be analytical and organized.

You don’t have to be a total number bunker to succeed, but you do need to be comfortable with numbers, understand their relevance and how to use them. With so much information changing through every stage of the creation, you must have an organized mind to cope. Make plenty of lists, spreadsheets and tables with filters to keep on top of everything. Working with creative teams and factories can be exciting as well as infuriating. Learning how to negotiate with people as well as prices is an asset. Negotiating with a designer to keep the cost price of a style low whilst maintaining his vision is hard but rewarding. Colours, garments and fabrics change almost every day during development, so be flexible about change and open to new ideas and ways of working.

Last but not least, have an eye for detail. In both development and production, looking at every small detail of garments, prints and fabrics is key. It is your job to notice the flaw in the fabric, the shade difference in a colour, or the fact that on a sample one sleeve is longer than the other.
OTHER ROLES IN THE TEAM

Every fashion company is different when it comes to job titles, but there are certain key roles in every company that are needed to develop a fashion collection.

In general, a brand is made up of four areas of expertise:

- **design,**
- **development,**
- **production and**
- **merchandising.**

In short, the designer designs the collection, the developer is the link between the designer and the factory, the production coordinator makes sure the collection is made and delivered, and the merchandiser is in charge of the financial part of the business.

In order to understand in detail the parts played by all these in the creation of a collection and how their roles relate to each other, here is a short overview of their interrelationships.

**DESIGN**
The designer designs the garments, prints and embroideries for the collection. Together with the developer, he will also select the colours and fabrics for the garments and he is involved in the sample reviews. Once the collection has been made, the designer assists in creating the selling tools to help the sales team sell the clothes. The various job titles in different brands that deal with these tasks are: design director, design manager, junior designer, graphic designer, print designer and design assistant.

Some companies have dedicated concept designers whose job it is to define the design direction most suitable for the range, brand or company. Their specific job is to research the brand to form a new direction for the new season's collection. This means following trend forecasters, fabric mills, music trends, lifestyle trends, previous catwalk shows and current street fashion. If it isn't financially viable to have a specific concept designer, the designer can define the concept.

**DEVELOPMENT**
The developer in a fashion company is the link between the designer and the factories that will mass-produce the garments. From the start of the season he helps the designer in selecting fabrics and colours, while also keeping an eye on the financial side of things with the merchandiser. When the designs are ready, the developer conveys the designer's wishes to the factory so they can make a sample. The developer and the others in the brand review this sample and give their feedback. The factory can now adjust and improve the sample until the developer and designer are happy with the end result. When all samples for the collection are finalized, the developer's job ends with helping to organise a launch, where the samples are presented to sales teams.

Within the area of development functions the various job titles in different brands can be: development director, product development manager, product developers, development assistant, fabric manager, senior product manager, product manager and category manager.

**PRODUCTION**
The production coordinator works closely with the developer to take the collection from launch through production
to when the garments leave the factory. She arranges production fittings and production planning and manages the final pricing, order quantities and bulk lead times with the factory. During production she will travel to the factory to check the quality of the garments and packaging. Functions that deal with the production of a fashion collection are production director, production / sourcing manager, production coordinator and quality control assistant.

MERCHANDISING
The merchandiser is in charge of the financial part of the business and works together with both the developer and the production coordinator. He sets the pricing structure for the collection, makes sure the brand makes a profit, and makes adjustments to the collection according to feedback from the sales teams. When the samples are approved, he works with the production coordinator and the factories to finalise the prices and delivery dates of the garments and then issues the purchase order. The various job titles with this responsibility are: merchandise director, merchandise manager, merchandise and buy manager, merchandise and buy planner, merchandise assistant.

Three other roles you might encounter in the industry are the pattern maker, the members of the sales team and the branding manager.

PATTERN MAKER
Pattern makers are technically trained designers who create paper patterns from sketches. Their job is to translate the sketch of the designer into an actual garment by applying the base measurements and calculations. Throughout the stages of development and production they also work alongside the factory, development and production team with the garment fittings. Pattern makers can also be called fit technicians.

SALES TEAM
The members of the sales team sell the finished collection to their customers, who can be international buyers, large department stores or small boutiques. Since they are connected to the stores and the buying public, the sales teams can inform the merchandiser about seasonal shifts in local sales trends so they can action adjustments in production if necessary. People who are selling a range can be called a sales manager or sales agent.

BRANDING MANAGER
The branding manager works for a branding or trims company, and develops new labels, buttons and badges for the brand to use on their garments. When dealing with branding, you will most certainly work with account managers.

SEASONS AND BUSINESS MODELS
In the past fashion companies presented new collections twice a year, in Autumn/Winter (Fall) and Spring/Summer. Nowadays new collections are launched every few months with Pre Fall, Holiday, Pre Spring and Summer, providing smaller collections to keep the customers shopping. All of these collections follow the same sequence of design, development, merchandising, sales and production, which means that all the teams are working every week, often juggling more than one ‘season’ at a time, to bring new fashion to the stores.
In some cases business models in the industry follow the same timelines on, structure and procedure, but in other cases they are vastly different. Let’s have a look at the two main business models, wholesale lines and retail lines to see how they differ.

**WHOLESALE LINES**
A wholesale line is bought by department stores or small independent shops throughout the year who sell it to the general public. This line can have between two and six collections a year (Pre Fall, Fall, Holiday, Pre Spring, Spring and Summer). Generally, with wholesale, the brand will design and make the collection at scheduled times of the year and then they will sell it to a department store, who will stock it in their stores with other wholesale brands.

**RETAIL LINES**
A retail line is for retail outlets only. This could, for example, be a high street chain, or maybe a brand that has its own stores. A retail line also launches between two and six and collections a year, but the chain stores or brands add new styles and stock into the stores every month. With retail, the development process can be shorter and more reactive to the shop customer. If a style is selling well in stores, the retail brand can decide to expand the style with more colours and fabrics.

In this book I explain the stages from the start of development to the end of production of one season. All these stages are relevant to both the retail and wholesale business models mentioned above, but in the discussion of timings in the text it is closer
RING + OUTERWEAR

- 16 1864 TCK TAN
- 17 ISO TCX CLOUD BURST
- 16 060 TCK BROWN (WHITE)
- 16 056 TCK OLIVE LEAF
A brand stays in business by creating new collections every few months in the hope that customers will keep buying their clothes. In order to provide coherence to a collection, the brand needs a concept. It is the foundation upon which the collection is created and it is an important point of reference during the development, launch and production stages of the collection. Its generation can be the result of moments of inspiration or of careful analysis of market trends; in practice, both are important contributors to the formation of a successful concept.

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

A concept is a design direction for the shape, colour, mood and fabric for any fashion collection, and is created at the beginning of the season. It creates the mood of the collection and is always open to different interpretations. The initial idea first needs to be analysed carefully and translated into something that people can actually look at, and that can set out the direction of the collection.

Several seasons ago the K Karl Lagerfeld launch concept was Rock and Roll Androgyny. The designer took images of androgynous models in skinny jeans and boyish clothes and built a men’s and women’s range around it. Black, white and grey were the colours, with an idea of using coated leather look fabrics, silver metallic prints and washed out, vintage look T-shirts. The starting point for the research was the love of denim and the colours, black and white, of Mr Lagerfeld himself. These three elements evolved into a concept that gave the feeling of rock and roll edgy clothes that could be worn by males and females.

A concept can come from fewer than three elements as well. A while ago, a spring collection for the Hilfiger Runway line had the theme: ‘New York Country Club’. The concept began with the words Country Club, and from there, images of 60s and 70s women’s sporting clothes, pleated tennis whites, halter neck tops and mini dresses were added to the visuals. Images of Katherine Hepburn in her signature high-waist wide leg pants matched with bra tops gave the movie star reference, and the fabrics for the mood were fine chiffons, and checked linens.
ELEMENTS OF A CONCEPT

The four parts of the concept are fabrics, colours, shapes and mood. We shall look at them in detail and explain what exactly they consist of and how they influence the process of development.

FABRIC

Fabrics (or yarns and textiles) are very important to the feeling of the concept. Most concepts are first presented in the form of a handful of fabric pieces. They provide a tangible expression of the feeling you want to convey. If you want to evoke a 1920s romantic, nostalgic feeling in a concept, chiffon would be perfect to conjure up an image. A men’s military theme would have heavy weight cotton or boiled woolen fabric to illustrate the mood. Fabrics add an extra dimension to the concept, but they do not have to be the only ones used for the collection. It is, however, a signature element.

COLOUR

Sitting alongside the selection of fabrics is the composition of the colour palette. The palette is a collection of colours (or tones, tints, shades, hues, stain wash or dyes) that will be used throughout the range collection. Making a palette for a concept is not easy. The shades selected have to work not only in many of the types of garments but also in the colours of buttons, zips, prints and embroideries.

For instance, yellow is a bright and 'happy' colour – mostly used for spring and summer ranges. It is a good colour for a T-shirt or a pair of socks, but can you imagine it in a wool coat or a suit? It's a hard colour to have...
it in a great mass, but in small portions or in a specific fabric it works. It is also great for small embroidery on the chest of a shirt, a print on a T-shirt, a raincoat, or even a chiffon dress, but it has to have its place. Navy, on the other hand, is a great suit or coat colour, as it is a classic shade that everyone can wear. It also works on trims (e.g. buttons and zips), but could be seen as boring or too ‘classic’ for a print or embroidery.

Experiment with fabrics to see what works together and what doesn’t. Take one colour and two or more fabrics, decide which fabric has the stronger colour tone when compared to the others. Do they all work or is one a stronger element? It is a nice challenge to assemble the colour palette, making sure it ticks the above boxes, as well as being ‘new’ and interesting for another season.

SHAPE
Shapes within a concept refer to the sizing aspects of the garments in the collection, and every season the shape of garments changes for both men and women. In the early 70s the style for trousers was flared at the hem and tight at the waist and hip. In the late 70s there was the drainpipe jean that was super tight all over. In the 80s we had the power suit with the padded shoulder, and a decade later the shoulder lines got softer and less structured, giving a more relaxed look.

These are just some important changes over decades, but even measurement variations of 5 cm can make a difference between seasons for a pair of high waist or waisted jeans. Being clear about the direction of the fit is vital for the concept.
Chapter 2: The Concept

Three Neck Lines:

LONG SLEEVE SHIRT

5.
Workshops at the industry trade fairs are free introductions to the trend company's services. They give examples of how they approach their research, and how it leads to useful and relevant information that can be bought. The workshops are usually split by market, so there are presentations on street fashion, and children's, men's and women's wear.

WEBSITES
Some websites that are highly used in the fashion industry are [www.mudpie.co.uk](http://www.mudpie.co.uk), [www.wgsn.com](http://www.wgsn.com) and [www.stylesight.com](http://www.stylesight.com). These have developed in order to cover every element of trend analysis from fabrics to colours, interiors, denim, junior, shoes, hats and garments. For a substantial fee, shop reports can be obtained from major fashion hubs around the globe, giving colour indications for every denomination and age group, and shape analysis for every known product group.

A mid point between the above trend websites and doing the whole thing yourself are companies, such as Mode Information ([www.modeinfo.com](http://www.modeinfo.com)). Working across all markets and demographics, Mode Information produces trend books and reports each season, which can be used to guide a designer or buyer on colours, fabrics, yarns and also shapes.
DURING REVIEWS

The concept is the creative backbone of the collection, and as a result it is used as a reference at the key review stages. At the proto review, launch and production review stages it is essential to refer back to the concept to ensure that the vision of the designer remains evident. With changes happening all the time on colour, fabric and fit, the developer and the designer will always need to be aware of the concept, and will question the link of the product of the moment to the concept before proceeding.

For instance, if one of the fabrics in the concept was a silver leather, it would be important to have that leather in at least three of the garments in the collection, as well as being used as a colour on a printed T-shirt and, perhaps, an embroidery on a shirt. This way the silver aspect is carried through the range. If in the proto review the silver print is cancelled and the embroidery changed to a purple colour, then we immediately have a problem, as we have lost some links to the concept. If, when we get to the production stage, we find that the orders for the silver fabric are not high enough and the leather is cancelled, we have lost every aspect of the key colour that was in the concept. By referring back to the concept at each key stage we can question the changes, so ensuring the concept stays intact throughout development and production.
Chapter 4: Fabrics

Without fabric there would be no garment. You could have the best design in the world, but without fabric it can’t be realized. Making a judgment call on which fabrics to use and for which garment is a skill, and it is one that can be learnt through experience in the workplace. For example, look at the clothes in your wardrobe. Take a cotton shirt and imagine what it would be like in a heavy wool fabric. Take a silk dress and imagine it in denim. Both the dress and shirt would still be wearable, but would probably be suitable for different occasions. Understanding which fabric is used for what style and why, is part of the skill of the developer.

FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

There are thousands of different fabrics used, but for a starting point I will break them down into four categories: knitted fabrics, woven fabric, bonded/non-woven fabrics, and yarns.

COMPOSITION

The composition of the fabric is the mix of different yarns it is made from. It can be split into two sections, the first is natural fibres (cotton, linen, wool and silk), and the second is synthetic or artificial fibres (e.g. viscose, modal, polyester, nylon). Some fabrics are made of a single fibre, and some are blends of two or more fibres. The composition of the fabric affects the performance of the fabric in its end use. For instance, a shirt in 100% cotton will probably be creased when it is washed and will need to be ironed. The same shirt in 50% cotton 50% polyester probably won’t need to be ironed, as the long fibres of the polyester yarn help to keep the fabric flatter.

CONSTRUCTION

The construction of a fabric refers to how it is made. Some are woven, some are knitted and some are bonded. Under these headings the categories can be broken down into different weaves and knitting techniques. Here are some examples of the types of weaves and fabrics and their suitability for specific garments and product groups.

WOVEN

A woven fabric is constructed by weaving a warp and a weft thread together. The warp threads run along the length of the fabric and the weft from side to side. At the edge of the fabric on each side is the selvedge. Woven fabrics can made from both natural and
synthetic fibres and can be used for shirts, coats, jackets, dresses, pants and skirts. The three basic weave constructions are plain, twill and satin.

**BONDED OR NON-WOVEN**
Bonded fabrics are constructed by sealing together synthetic fibres by heat or adhesive. They are not as strong as woven fabrics, but can be used for interlinings for garments or in felted fabric, which can be used for hats or slippers.

**JERSEY KNIT**
Jersey knit is a knitted fabric, and is used for T-shirts or any lightweight knitted garments. Most jersey is made on a circular knitting machine, which means it is knitted in a seamless loop. Jersey knit doesn't have to be in cotton; it can be in a variety of yarns. Common jersey qualities are: single jersey, double jersey or interlock.

**SWEATER YARN**
Sweater yarns are also knitted into garments, but here they describe sweaters rather than T-shirts. Sweater yarns can be of natural, synthetic or metallic origin, and are usually knitted up on a loom rather than on a circular knitting machine. The thickness of the yarn is indicated by its gauge, and this is indicated as 'gg'. A yarn for a hand-knit piece will have a low gauge of 3gg, whereas a very lightweight or fine gauge knit would be in 16-18gg. The number of the gauge refers to the number of rows to an inch, so the lower the number the thicker the yarn.
TIMINGS

The selection of the fabric begins when the concept is created. The designer will have some fabric ideas from the concept, which can be as vague as ‘printed silk’, or a ‘textured wool’. At the same time as the developer is working with the sketches and the range plan, she is also working alongside the designer on the fabric selection. The designer has a clear idea about which fabrics should be used, but at this stage they are not yet finalised. Once the design process is underway, these ideas will start to become more specific, with a firmer view of the silk being a crepe, or the wool being a bouclé, and from there the selection goes one step deeper into different weights of fabric and different compositions that may be required. Maybe the silk will be a cotton silk mix, whereas the wool may be mixed with cashmere.

PLACES TO SELECT FABRICS

FABRIC FAIRS

Fabric fairs are the best places to source and select new fabrics and yarns, but what happens at the fairs, who works there and how does the fabric selection process work? Fabric mills show their collections at the fabric fairs twice a year, either directly or via agents, to designers, developers, and fabric buyers. Examples of some European fabric fairs are Première Vision (pv) in Paris, Munich Fabric Start in Germany or Milano Unica in Milan. But there are also many fairs in Asia and the USA. There is also a specific yarn fair in Florence.

FABRIC AGENTS

Agents are the middlemen between the fabric mill and the brand, with many being linked to more than one mill; they earn
their money from linking the right mill with the right customer. An advantage of using a fabric agent is that if they work with more than one mill, you are able to see multiple collections in one appointment.

**FABRIC MILLS**

Fabric mills come in all shapes and sizes. Some are huge, covering many different types of fabrics (wools, linens, cottons and synthetics) and some specialise in one specific fabric type. Each mill will have a range relevant to the oncoming season, and their job is to entice the visitor into ordering a header card or colour card. The secrecy around the fabrics is due to the possibility of having fabric ideas stolen. The mills are very protective of their fabrics, and it is common for them not to allow you on their exhibition stand unless you have an appointment with the agent or with the mill directly.
Chapter 5: Development and Production Information Flow

The creation, design, development and production of a collection involve the generation, sharing and distribution of a huge amount of information. The information flow from the start of the development process to the end of production is a crucial element for the successful internal workings of the brand and for the external relationships with the factories, trim suppliers and customers.

For some companies the initial basis of all information is a development matrix, which is created at the start of the design process to catalogue all the styles, fabric details and colours; this is managed by the development team, and some of the information is shared with factories. Another method of collating this information is via a PLM (product lifecycle management) system, which is a software package, which, once the basic data has been entered for each style, tracks the data and changes just as the development matrix or technical pack does. Details of these systems can be found in the list of useful websites at the end of the book (p. 227).

Once the collection is ready to launch, the development matrix is merged into the line list, which is a financially driven document based on the original matrix, but used by the sales and merchandising teams. Within a few weeks this document is adjusted again to take into consideration the production planning. The production team adapts the line list, adding key date information, which is shared with the factories. This one document at the start of the creation of the collection can drive the flow of information until the final goods have been shipped from the factory.

During the development, sales and production stages information is changing hourly, so it is vital to update the documents and keep the information current. A style that has been designed but not entered in the development matrix may not be sent to a factory, so the proto will not be made. An incorrect cost price in the line list at the collection launch will equate to an incorrect
profit margin and could cause a cancellation; an incorrect shipment date in the production schedule can mean a late delivery for a factory. It is extremely important to have a clear flow of information and dedicated people to keep it updated.

THE DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

The development matrix is the starting point for the flow of information for the whole collection; it is an Excel chart, which holds the majority of the details of the tech packs for the range being developed. It can also be known as the style list/product list or style bible. Whatever the name, it is an extremely important document and without it the whole development process would be a mess of epic proportions.

Even the most organised of individuals gets confused throughout the development process, as there are daily changes to styles, fabrics, colours and dates. It is essential to have one form and, if possible, one person with the responsibility to update it.

WHO Creates it?
The development matrix is created by a member of the development team as the design team sketches. It should be ready to be compiled as the sketches are handed to the developer. With the matrix being a working document, it is important that the one person who adds, cancels and changes the style information doesn't delete anything. It is crucial for the development team that every style remains visible on the matrix even if it has been cancelled. Styles can be reinstated and recancelled; so, by using a
The fact that one document can follow the process from start to finish (like the development matrix) means that you have a full history to refer to not only for the current season, but also in future seasons, if a style is to be revisited and updated. For the majority of the pages the developer works with the designer to ensure that all the details relating to fabric, colour and look are workable. In general, at the very early stages of building the range the designer works with the developers, and together they determine the ‘fits’ or ‘blocks’ of the garments, and the pattern makers realize those fits and create the patterns or base patterns.

WHO CREATES IT?
The developer creates the tech pack once she has received the sketches from the designer. One of the most complicated aspects of the tech pack is the size specification. I have already mentioned that the designer and the developer discuss the ‘fit’ of the style, but the pattern creation by the pattern maker is something that takes time and skill.

THE PATTERN MAKER
The pattern maker is a technically trained designer who can create patterns from sketches. They can work for the brand or for the factory, and can turn the sketch of the
designer into an actual garment by applying the base measurements and calculations.

FIT OR BLOCK
A ‘fit’ is a description to explain the silhouette of a garment. A ‘block’ is a basic pattern, which is made with the specific customer measurements for the brand. Blocks come first, then arrives the fit. Sometimes blocks are not used at all and a new fit is made from scratch. The designer gives the developer a silhouette or fit with the sketch, and it is then up to the developer to create the size spec with the assistance of the pattern maker. These ‘fits’ refer to a set of measurements, which can make the shirt tight or loose. These measurements are carefully constructed by the pattern maker to ensure that the proportions of the garment are correct and that the fit is appropriate for the market (the end customer).

Each brand has a target customer they sell to and each customer has a specific fit. The Japanese market in general uses smaller proportions than do most Europeans. The German market has much bigger proportions than those of the Spanish market. So, what this means is that if a company is supplying to the Far East as well as Northern Europe,
In development and production you need to manage the flow of information. If you don’t consider yourself organized or able to multitask, choose a different area of the business.

Writing up technical information needs to be clear and precise. Never make assumptions that the factory understands; check and double check everything until they are clear.

As the development matrix is the hub for the style information, keep it updated and without error, as it will reduce problems at a later stage. This is your responsibility.

If you are using more than one factory, be careful when sending the matrix to them. Filter the sheet so that only the information relevant to that factory goes out.

If more than one person uses the planning sheets and you are concerned about other people changing details without your knowledge, password protect it so only you can change details.
VIII

Chapter 8: Reviews
Chapter 8: **Reviews**

Reviews are opportunities for the garments and prices to be assessed at the key stages of developing and producing the collection. At the ‘prototype’, ‘salesman sample’ and ‘production’ stage, the designer, the developer and the merchandiser review the collection together, each from their particular viewpoint. Reviews are necessary not only to check up on the current progress of the garments, but also to refer back to the concept and range plan, which were formed at the start of development.

After handing over the initial tech packs of the styles to the factory, it can take anywhere from 4 to 7 weeks for a first protos to be ready, depending on the complexity of styles and the type of vendor you use. The factory will prepare the prototypes, and if you have denim, they will make leg panels as well (as mentioned earlier in chapter 4).

As the developer, you approach the proto review from a different perspective from that of the designer or the merchandise team, who are also present at the review. You will look at whether the sleeves are too long or the pocket is too high, the designer will look to see if the design is right for the concept, and the merchandise team will be concerned with the overall range plan and the prices.

In an ideal world, it is best to review all the garments of the range together, so that the reviewers can see how all the styles, colours and prices align, but the fact that the initial handover of the styles to the factories is spread out in time, means that you get to review them at different times.
REVIEW CHECKLIST

Before going into the process of the proto review, make sure you have all the paperwork, recording stuff and practical tools to hand. Here is a handy checklist to work by:

- **Paperwork**
- **Practical tools**
- **Organising**
- **Compare to tech packs**
- **Measuring**
- **Recording tools**

- **Paperwork**
  As the review happens, fabrics are checked, changed and added. Colours are swapped and deleted, and new styles added. As a result it is very useful to have all the files ready, so that you have everything to hand. Have all your technical packs together, along with all fabric selections and colour cards. This will mean that you have direct access to the style information and will make the checking part easier. Have a printed out copy of the development matrix split to the factory, as well as a total overview. You will be referring to this constantly, as styles, colours and fabrics are changed. This is also a good place to make notes of added and cancelled styles.

- **Practical tools**
  At the review, the team will also look at buttons, trims and branding ideas, and may pin notes, recording ideas onto the garments, so have pins with you at all times. If the garments need to be cut and adjusted it is also best to have an iron and ironing board on hand to make the finish neater.
Organising
As obvious as this sounds, placing the samples in some kind of logical order makes a huge difference to the flow of the meeting. They can be placed in order of the development matrix, fabric, colour or product group. It is easier to compare like with like together.

Compare to tech packs
I find that a quick reread of the technical packs takes you back to the start of the process, and every conversation you had with the designer is a clear and vivid memory. Remember that the tech packs were made two months earlier, and the small details that were so important back then are sometimes completely forgotten about now. Read through the tech packs, taking stock of the details and specific requests, ensuring that they have been carried out on the sample; if for some reason they haven’t, find out why and have that reason ready when the designer reviews the style. As a developer, you are there not only to support the designer, but also to drive the reviewing process forward.

Measuring
We already know from chapter 5 that a factory has been sent the size spec according to which the sample should be made. Once the proto is made, the factory should check the sample against the requested spec before they send it through for the review, noting if the garment is exactly as specified or whether
it is out of tolerance (too big or too small), but in some cases there is no time. There are a number of reasons why a garment could be out of tolerance (out of spec), maybe it is the pattern, maybe shrinkage or maybe workmanship. Measuring the samples yourself easily adds another three days on to the trip, but it means that you have a clearer picture of the fit and can conduct the review of the garments more effectively.

**Recording tools**
Images of the garments will be invaluable once the review is over to remind you what was changed. Have a digital camera with you to record the changes you make in a review.

**PROTO REVIEW**

The proto review is the first sample that is reviewed by the developer, the designer and the merchandiser. The sample is made by the factory based on the technical pack, and is the first opportunity to review the garment, fabric, branding and cost price.

**WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?**
The proto review usually happens around 4-6 weeks after the technical packs have been handed over by the developer to the factory. The proto sample can take anything from 2 to 4 weeks to make, depending on the complexity of the style and type, the lead-time of the fabric and also the size of factory. A large factory with many machinists and a sample room dedicated to making
proto types can make a sample from start to finish in two weeks, but a smaller company may take four, because they have fewer facilities to cater for this. Similarly, a T-shirt will take less time to make than a leather jacket, as there are fewer processes involved in its construction. So, the timing of the review can be variable.

LOCATION
Proto reviews can either be conducted at your office or at the buying office, agent or factory. As with the tech pack handover discussed in chapter 5, doing the proto review at the factory is always better for focus, and as you have the garments there and its makers to hand, you are really able to concentrate on the matter, free from any distraction. The disadvantage is that you have to transport all your files and materials with you. The review can take from 3 days to 2 weeks, and at times it can be a demanding and frustrating experience. In a matter of days you, the design and the merchandise teams will review the same range that took 3 months to develop. It is an intense time and one needs mental strength and good preparation in order to come
through it unscathed. You will be exhausted, possibly jet lagged, surrounded by work colleagues and working 14-hour days.

GARMENTS
The review of the garments happens in four stages:

› **Fitting**
  Fitting the samples on a fit model

› **Checking**
  Checking the samples against the technical pack’s requirements

› **Changing**
  Changing the styles for the fit or fabric

› **Adding and cancelling**
  Adding new styles or cancelling others that haven’t worked in an actual garment

1 FITTING
A proto fitting is an important part of the review, and involves the designer, the development team, the account manager from the factory and a pattern maker either from the brand or from the factory. All the garments need to be fitted on a ‘fit model’. Sometimes the brand will take its regular
Sometimes the sales teams give feedback on the fit of the garments. These comments made by the sales teams should be made known to the production team at this fitting. It is very important for the production team to physically see the garment on when discussing these comments, as only then can essential changes be made and measurements corrected.

**PRE-PRODUCTION SAMPLES**

During the production fitting, the production team and pattern maker analyse the fit and make of the salesman sample. If the fit is not correct, or perhaps the sales teams have made suggestions for changing the style, it is common for another sample to be requested by the team. This sample is called a pre-production sample (pp sample) and needs to be approved by both the production team and the pattern maker before production can start.
It is made in the correct fabric with correct branding and should be a true representation of what the produced garments will be like when in the stores.

SIZE SET
Another type that is sometimes requested is a size set of samples, which is a set of three or more samples of the same style but in the different sizes that will be ordered. This is requested by the brand when it is important to see how the different sizes within the style affect the proportions of the style. Perhaps a style includes large pockets; if you use the same size pocket for a size as is used on an xl the proportions will look strange, so something called grading is used, and a full size set for a style will give a true representation of all the sizes of the pockets.

Sometimes, however, a size set is requested for a style that has a greater size coverage, for instance denim. If jeans are made in a size scale starting with 23” and ending in 36”, this will include the sizes 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, and 36. As denim is nearly always washed, which can have strange effects on shrinkage, it is necessary to get full or half size sets to check all proportions and measurements. A full size set in denim would include all the sizes, but a half may have 24, 26, 28 and 30. Some brands request a full size set for every style and some only for select styles.

In the diagrams above you can see that proportions in a garment play a huge part in the size spec, and because of that, for some styles we ask for a size set to ensure that the proportions look correct for all the sizes. On the three sketches we see that three sizes are involved: xs, s and m. On the sketches the same size pockets and belt have been used for all sizes so you can see that where it is correct proportionally for the xs, they are much too small for the m. The pockets and belt should be graded up proportionally to avoid this.

GRADING OR GRADE RULE
When the production teams have fitted all the samples and are updating the technical
Chapter 9: Launching & Sales

The launch of a collection follows a development period of between three and nine months, and is the first time the whole collection will be seen by the design, development, merchandising and production teams in its final form with the fabrics, colours and fit, hopefully, as the designer originally envisaged. The method of launch can mean anything from a rail of garments displayed in an apartment to a catwalk show at an international fashion week, but regardless of the method of launch, the sole purpose is to sell the styles to get the production orders for the styles which will be made by different factories and shipped to the stores to be bought by the end consumer.

TYPES OF LAUNCHES

There are many different methods of launching a range, a private view in a showroom, a catwalk show, an internet live stream, a shop opening, an inter-company meeting and a trade show. Most brands these days have both catwalk and inter-company launches; catwalk shows being purely for PR, whilst the inter-company launch is sales driven. For our examples we shall look at a catwalk show, an inter company sales launch and a trade show.

CATWALK SHOWS

Catwalk shows at the international fashion weeks are held twice a year at major hubs around the world, and are attended by the international fashion press, fashion buyers from large and small retail stores and celebrities. Most main cities have their own fashion weeks to showcase international and local talent, but the main ones publicised in the press are: New York, London, Paris and Milan. A catwalk show can last from five to twenty minutes and shows models walking down a catwalk with outfits that have been styled by the brand’s creative team. There are
no displays showing concept boards or rails of clothes. Instead, it is a slick production costing thousands of Euros /dollars.

INTER-COMPANY LAUNCHES
An inter-company sales launch is an in house meeting comprising the sales teams, designers, developers, merchandisers and the production team, meeting usually in a separate venue, away from the brand’s office, for up to a week. The concept, garments, colours and prices are reviewed for each market, and workshops relating to selling techniques, pricing and styling are offered to train the salesmen to enhance the sales.

INDUSTRY TRADE SHOWS
Trade shows have been used for many years as a method of showcasing your brand. These are a great source of inspiration and trend validation, as looking at other people’s collections and gaining a new perspective

TRUE STORY
I worked for a brand that had an external design/development team, and for the first season we had an extremely short development time frame. As we moved closer to the launch date we found it harder and harder to get exact product information from the external team, and we started to get concerned. With one month to go before the launch we still hadn’t set up styles in the system, create a line book and manage the pricing set up for sales.

Exactly one week before launching we received the garments and were at last able to put together all the selling tools needed to launch this new brand. We managed in seven days what most teams do in three months.
on your own, is a useful tool. Bread&Butter in Berlin, Pitti Uomo in Florence and Magic in Las Vegas are just a few examples of international events, but there are just as many local fashion weeks in which you can rent a space and show the range to local and international buyers and retailers. If you are a small brand, launching it is a great opportunity to reach out to customers, but also to catch up with existing ones. They can, however, be expensive to fund and there is more of a trend now to use online methods for brand promotion, leaving the large trade shows for the big corporate companies. Larger brands use these shows as a PR exercise, staging catwalk shows and special events to gain brand awareness.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Catwalk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation time</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation time</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Venue at Fashion Week</td>
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<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Press and buying presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Celebrity driven / Buying starts 2 days later / Garments shown on models</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation time</td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Private venue or within company office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Launch for company sales teams and offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>No press involved directly / No celebrity presence / Sales start approx 1 week later / Selling workshops are given to aid sales and range understanding / Each piece is shown individually, but key looks are merchandised</td>
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<th>Retail</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Private venue or within company office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Launch for company sales teams and offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>No press involved directly / No celebrity presence / Sales start approx 1 week later / Pieces and looks are merchandised in shop fit mock-ups within the company building and then replicated around their stores / The capsules of the ranges are designed to be merchandised by colour so it's important to show them this way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**TRUE STORY**

The first time I was involved on a catwalk line, I started the day after the show and there were no clear notes as to which styles had been used. Of course you can see online the runway shows, so in some cases it was clear about the jackets and coats but not for the items underneath which were still marginally visible (vests, shirts). Trying to list all the garments from a website picture is complicated. The following season I was at the show and witnessed over a hundred changes of style, garments and running order before the show, so rather than panic with pen and paper, I sat back, embraced the surreal and insanely exciting experience of a catwalk show and the morning after the show I went through the rails where all the garments were hanging for all the individual ‘looks’, making all the notes I needed.
Designers’ illustrations are sometimes used as selling tools because they bring flat sketches to life.
This sales figure from the sales team needs to be workable for the factories' production and fabric minimums; if these are both acceptable, then the style or colour can be added. If only one sales team has requested this added style and it doesn't reach the fabric minimums then the merchandisers will make this request open to all the sales teams in all the markets to see if they want to add to their sales figures as well. This sometimes helps to increase the expected sales, and it can make the style addition possible. Once the quantities are known, the merchandise team will issue a purchase order and the style will be added to the line list.

**CHANGES TO STYLES**

Style changes, or design updates, can be anything from removing a pocket to adding sleeves, and are much easier to handle than style additions. The changes are usually handled by the production team and are worked into the fitting comments for production. Changes to styles during the sales period are an additional part of the production process, and easy to manage for the production team and the factory. All changes, however, have implications for the price, so new prices need to be calculated by the factory, sent to the merchandise team and entered into the line list.

Reviewing the pricing is a complicated and time-consuming process involving the merchandise and the production teams and the manufacturer. The final prices that were entered into the line list for the launch are in some cases subject to change as styles are amended, updated or added. As a result, there is a continuing dialogue between the above teams on whether to maintain the profit margin or the target prices, or to establish new prices following the changes.

**BULK ORDERS**

Throughout the sales period the sales teams enter all their order quantities from the sales meetings, the merchandise team collates all the figures and analyses the bulk orders per style, colour and size. These will eventually be the basis of a purchase order.

At this stage the merchandiser and the production teams decide if the buy quantity/purchase order should include a stock quantity as well, or whether it should be exactly what was ordered. If a style has great potential within the range then the order should include some extra stock, which can be over and above the actual sales figures. This stock can be used for replenishment if the style sells out in the stores. If no additional stock is ordered, that shows less confidence in a style and that the brand will be happy to sell the amount ordered and no more.

The decision about stock quantities may have very important consequences for the profitability of the range, because sometimes these styles turn out to be a huge success, but if there is no additional stock, it means that once they are sold out, that is it. If the fabric has a short production lead time, then the factory can remake the style in about two months, but if the fabric has a long lead time, the chance of reordering the style is slight and it will not be possible to replenish the stores with that style before the end of the season. On the other hand, ordering and holding reserve stock in a style that is less successful can be an expensive mistake.
Melanie Tebbutt is senior sourcing manager at Burberry. After setting up and running her own street-wear brand in London for 3 years, Melanie worked on the technical side of the industry in areas of pattern cutting, sampling and production for small UK based brands. In 2004 she graduated from the London College of Fashion in the field of Product Development, and moved to Amsterdam taking up a position in product development within the Sport Performance division at Nike.

In 2011 Melanie moved to Tommy Hilfiger Europe, working exclusively on the runway collection in the role of product manager, and later returned to the UK to take up the position at Burberry. She is based in London.
What are your top 3 tips for developing a fashion collection from the perspective of your profession?

1) Be prepared to be extremely flexible, ready to adapt to change and to think on your feet. Push boundaries with ideas of others and your own. Trouble shooting is a big part of the role.

2) As a developer you are in the middle between the creative, the technical and the business people. Respect and understand everyone's deadlines and agendas.

3) Build strong relationships with external vendors with mutual respect. All new relationships take some time to build. The more you put into them initially will help the product to develop. Ensure you understand their values from the outset, which will help the respect factor from both sides. Give clear expectations, share your goals and monitor performance.

What, in your opinion is the most misconceived idea of the fashion industry?

The glamour. Traveling to different countries sounds fun. It can be, but be prepared to spend most of your time on the road, in factories in jetlagged mode. During a two week preparation on set for New York Fashion Week, I worked solidly for 14 days, with just one day off. Running around for samples and making calls around the clock to all time zones. At one point I was in the back of a FedEx van hunting for missing boxes. Not so glamorous!

What are the 3 things a developer/production coordinator should understand from the perspective of your role?

1) Ensure all raw materials are sourced from the same country of origin as the garment of manufacture, or within countries which benefit positively from duties. Especially if GP targets and lead time are part of the range plan strategy.

2) Be extremely conscious of lead times for both raw material and garment production. Calendar discipline is a must for approving of raw materials and garment fit to meet delivery dates and price negotiation.

3) If developing a commercial collection, always keep the target FOB-s in mind when pre-selecting fabrics for design. Calculate a pre-cost before signing off designs for sampling. Have a plan B if exceeding targets to present at proto review. If the style is a revenue driver, it will help to balance the weighted margin. Be conscious of fabric minimums within the range plan for production planning.
The process of developing and producing a fashion collection is an exhilarating, creative and repetitive process, filled with specialist terminology and descriptions at every twist and turn. Whether you are forming your own company or starting in an established fashion organisation, you will soon discover that the terminology used is both highly specific and varied.

But the question is, who tells you these terms and how are you supposed to remember them? If you are lucky, you will land yourself in a position in a company that celebrates abbreviations with files listing them, but in others, it is a simple case of writing them in a notebook and referring back when the need occurs.

It can be daunting at first to be that fish out of water, but after a few weeks words and phrases will become familiar as they are thrown around the office like fabric in a sample room. The skill lies in understanding their importance and their relevance in the procedures you are enacting, so here, in the glossary, are the key terms and general rules and tools explained for your reference.
**AGENT**
An agent for manufacturing is usually a one-person operation whose aim is to introduce the factory to the brand and provide a basic level of interaction between the two parties.  > pp. 52, 67, 115, 143, 183

**ATELIER**
An atelier is a small to medium sized workshop set up for high end luxury products. The atelier studio works with an artisan approach, meaning, that in most cases the fabric is cut by hand instead of on automated cutting tables and the makers make entire garments rather than just one small part.  > pp. 112, 115, 124

**BLOCK**
A ‘block’ is a basic pattern, which is made with the specific customer measurements for the brand.  > p. 83

**BRANDING**
Branding is a method of adding the name of the company or brand onto a garment. Buttons, labels and zippers can all carry the company name or logo, and this helps the customer to differentiate between one company and another.  > pp. 16, 94, 145, 158

**BUY**
The buy is another word for the total order quantity that the shops have ordered and which is made by the factory.  > pp. 66, 173

**BUYING OFFICE**
A buying office operates in a similar manner to an agent in providing a link between the brand and the factory, but is a larger organization, comprising account managers who can take sole responsibility for the brand’s account.  > pp. 114, 136

**CALLING OFF TRIMS**
Calling off trims is the process whereby the brand or factories contact the trim company to order trims.  > p. 97

**CATWALK LINE**
A catwalk line has between two and four collections of garments a year and shows at one of the many international Fashion Weeks (for example, New York or Milan). The shows contain a mixture of commercial styles that buyers will order for their stores, and press pieces, which magazines will feature in fashion shoots. Catwalk shows are used by many high street brands as an indication for new trend directions.  > pp. 113, 164

**CIF**
This is a method of supplying goods from a manufacturer to a brand, which includes all costs for the garment manufacture in addition to the full cost of transportation to the brand’s nominated location (usually the brand’s central warehouse).  > p. 146

**CMT**
CMT means Cut / Make / Trim. It literally means that the factory only costs these elements in the price, not the fabric cost. This is bought directly by the brand and not by the factory.  > pp. 121, 146

**COLLECTION**
A collection is the collective name for a group of garments that are linked together by a concept or theme. An alternative word or phrase for collection is range, or range of garments.  > pp. 16, 22, 31, 45, 66, 88, 155, 168, 177

**COLOUR CARD**
A colour card (or colour palette) is a selection of shades compiled by the design or concept team, which gives a colour direction for the season.  > pp. 23, 53, 60, 133, 169