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BY HAND

WADE FORMAN + ZACHARY REEDER. BESPOKE CLOTHIERS. ENTREPRENEURS.

BUILDING A LUXURY MENSWEAR BUSINESS IN INDIANA THROUGH CRAFTSMANSHIP, RELATIONSHIPS, AND UNCOMPROMISING FIT.

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At The Tailored Society, Wade Forman and Zachary Reeder have built a bespoke menswear business rooted in exacting fit, trusted relationships, and deep industry knowledge. The certified clothiers explain what distinguishes bespoke from handmade, how mastery is passed down, and why world-class craftsmanship and luxury can thrive right here in Indiana.

ANDREA SIMPSON: **BESPOKE, CUSTOM, AND MADE-TO-MEASURE ARE OFTEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY. WHAT MAKES A GARMENT TRULY BESPOKE—AND IS THAT THE SAME AS HANDMADE?**

WADE FORMAN: Bespoke has two defining features. First, the garment begins with the client's own pattern. We take his measurements, identify his posture, discuss the silhouette and fit, then draft an individual paper pattern. Made-to-measure starts with a stock block pattern and manipulates it.

Second, bespoke involves fittings at different stages of construction. We create a basted preliminary garment, put it on the client, assess the pattern, and make corrections before constructing the final garment.

ZACHARY REEDER: Handmade doesn't automatically mean bespoke. A ready-to-wear or made-to-measure garment can be handmade. Bespoke describes the individual pattern and process; hand-stitching is part of how our bespoke garments are constructed. Bespoke is custom, but not all custom is bespoke.

We learn what the client needs and choose the fabric and details. The cloth is cut by hand and assembled into a roughly 50% complete basted garment. Four or five weeks later, we hold the first fitting, then adjust the pattern. The final garment is hand-cut and hand-stitched.

We're haberdashers, not tailors. We consult, design, measure, fit, and build wardrobes. Tailors stitch; cutters cut.

AS: **WHERE DOES THE GREATEST SKILL COME INTO PLAY?**

WF: Understanding men's bodies and how to make each man look his best. A man may wear his trousers low when moving them to his natural waist would make him look fifteen or twenty pounds lighter. You can learn to measure in school, but judgment comes from seeing hundreds or thousands of bodies.

It's also knowing what the garment must do. A client may say, "I need a navy suit," but there are a thousand navies. Does he travel? Run hot? Need a workhorse? The right fabric depends on the life he'll live in it.

AS: **HOW MUCH OF YOUR WORK IS EDUCATING THE CLIENT?**

ZR: It's huge. We show clients the pattern and basted garment and explain why fit and fabric matter. Even people in our industry confuse handmade with bespoke. The language is so muddied that education is part of preserving the craft.

We also help clients see a wardrobe rather than a transaction. Interchangeable pieces can create dozens of outfits. Before a consultation, we explain how we work and what the investment may be. We never want someone to feel embarrassed or sold to.

WF: We wear and test the fabrics ourselves. We know how they drape on different bodies and wear over time. Those looks aren't just luxuries; they're tools.

AS: **WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BUILD A CAREER IN THIS FIELD—AND TO BE A GOOD MENTEE?**

WF: Passion. To become really good, you have to go down rabbit holes you'll never enter if this is simply a job. Both of us started in menswear at sixteen. Use your age as a weapon: find a mentor, ask to do more, and jump in. My mentors let me buy for the store at sixteen or seventeen because I kept asking, "What else can I do? How do I grow?" Established people often want to help when they see their younger selves in you.

True tailoring education is harder to access. There are few schools in America; someone may need to spend two years in Europe. I hope more pathways develop here because the trade needs them.

ZR: We went through fourteen manufacturers before finding our primary one. Without passion, we might have accepted the first adequate option.

AS: **WHAT PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS AND INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIPS DISTINGUISH YOUR BUSINESS?**

WF: We are certified custom clothiers through the Custom Tailors and Designers Association, and among only fifteen master bespoke clothiers in North America. Those credentials required years in the trade, coursework, and testing. They weren't earned over a weekend.

ZR: We've worked hard to build direct relationships with fabric mills. We're one of four companies in North America with a direct relationship with Fox Brothers in England. We choose mills with heritage and something distinctive to offer because each may have exactly the right cloth for a client.

AS: **WHAT HAS ALLOWED THIS BUSINESS TO SUCCEED IN INDIANA?**

WF: Understanding our market. If your clients aren't willing to spend $5,000 on a suit, you shouldn't sell $5,000 suits. Know who your client is and how he lives, then keep bringing him something new. That curiosity keeps the business from becoming stagnant.

Just because we're in Indiana doesn't mean we can't operate at the highest level of fashion. You can create something special anywhere. People travel to us because they don't expect to find this here.

ZR: We also bring Midwestern values to it. What may look intimidating from outside becomes warm and relaxed once you walk through the door. We care about the person before the transaction. You can have the knowledge and the beautiful space, but you can't buy that. ✂