1. Why does this immersion matter?

Here's a strange fact worth sitting with before you walk into Kangaro's Ludhiana facility: the stapler you'll see being made today works on essentially the same mechanical principle as one patented in 1866. A spring-loaded striker drives a bent metal fastener through paper; an anvil bends the prongs back to clinch it shut. That's it. That's the whole idea, and it has barely changed in over 150 years. And yet Kangaro, a company built entirely around this one seemingly "solved" mechanism, has grown from a single proprietorship in 1959 into a business generating over ₹700 crore in annual revenue, exporting to more than 100 countries, and winning an export excellence award every single year since 1996.

That combination should immediately raise a genuine strategic question, not a rhetorical one: how does a company build a serious, sustained New Product Development function around a product whose core mechanism was settled before India's independence? This isn't a company inventing a new category the way a startup might. It's a company that has had to find real, defensible innovation inside a category most people assume has no room left to innovate at all. That's a harder, more interesting NPD problem than building something from scratch, because every improvement has to be won inside a design nobody expects to change.

The second half of your agenda, exports, is inseparable from the first. Kangaro didn't simply grow domestically and then start shipping abroad as an afterthought. It has been formally recognised for export performance for nearly three decades running, and its own materials describe a genuinely full manufacturing stack, springs, rivets, and complex multi-part components all made in-house across eight facilities. A company that vertically integrates down to the individual spring and simultaneously exports to over 100 countries is making two related but distinct strategic bets: control your own production quality closely enough to be trusted by a domestic customer base that treats "Kangaro" almost as a category name, and build that same trust with buyers on the other side of the world who've likely never set foot in Ludhiana. Both halves of this visit are really asking the same underlying question from two directions: how does a manufacturer in a mature, unglamorous product category keep growing, at home and abroad, once the obvious innovations are already done?

2. Company snapshot

Kangaro was founded in 1959 by Lala Shri Janki Dass Jain, starting as a small operation in Ludhiana, Punjab. Today it operates under the umbrella of Kangaro Industries Limited, along with related entities such as Kanin (India) and Munix (India), and it has grown into what the company calls KGOC, short for Kangaro Group of Companies. The brand is present in over 100 countries across six continents, with some of the most acclaimed corporate accounts and top global retail chains as clients, and it runs eight manufacturing facilities across six manufacturing hubs in India, employing over 4,000 people.

What makes Kangaro interesting from a manufacturing standpoint is how vertically integrated the operation is. All units are vertically integrated, meaning every manufacturing operation happens in-house, starting from the smallest components like springs and rivets all the way up to complex multi-part assemblies. The company runs its own sheet metal components shop, a machine shop with special-purpose machines, a fully automatic electroplating plant, a fully automatic powder coating plant, a plastic injection moulding shop, and a heat treatment shop, all under one roof. For a stationery company, this is an unusually deep manufacturing stack. Most competitors in this category outsource large parts of their component supply chain. Kangaro's decision to keep it all in-house has direct implications for both of today's themes: it gives them tighter control over new product design and tooling, and it gives them the cost base and quality consistency needed to compete as an exporter against much larger global players.

The product range itself covers staplers, paper punches, staple pins, staple removers, paper cutters, binder punches, tape dispensers, file clips, and a broad range of tackers and heavy-duty staples, alongside newer categories the company has added over the decades. Products are developed under the strict supervision of over 100 technocrats and highly skilled people, particularly focused on ergonomics.

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3. Industry context: Why this category is harder than it looks

It is easy to dismiss staplers and paper punches as a low-innovation category. That assumption is worth interrogating rather than accepting. A few structural realities shape how a company like Kangaro has to think about both product development and exports.

First, this is a category with genuine global competition. Indian manufacturers in office and stationery products compete not just against domestic rivals but against large multinational players and a flood of low-cost Chinese manufacturing. Staying relevant here requires either being meaningfully cheaper, meaningfully better, or both, and cost leadership alone eventually gets undercut by an even cheaper competitor. This is the classic trap of a commodity-adjacent category, and it is exactly why NPD becomes existential rather than optional even for something as apparently simple as a stapler.

Second, the domestic Indian market itself is bifurcated. Kangaro sells to home and office consumers, but also to corporates, government departments, and educational institutions, each of which has different purchasing criteria, different price sensitivity, and different product expectations. A product designed purely for a retail shelf will not necessarily win a government tender, and vice versa. This forces the company to think about product variants and range architecture rather than a single flagship design.

Third, and this connects directly to the export theme, global buyers do not want the same product Indian retail consumers want. Ergonomic standards differ, safety and material certifications differ by geography, and even something as basic as stapler capacity or paper size compatibility (A4 versus letter size, for instance) can vary by market. This means product development at an exporting Indian manufacturer cannot happen in isolation from the export function. The two teams effectively co-design.

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4. Booz, Allen and Hamilton: The six categories of new products

Booz, Allen and Hamilton, the consulting firm, developed this classification in 1982, distinguishing six categories of new products. Here is each one explained, with how it would map onto a company like Kangaro.

1. New-to-the-world products
These are products that create an entirely new market that did not exist before. The classic example is the introduction of products like laptops and palmtops, which created an entirely new market of mobile computing. This is the highest-risk, highest-reward category, and it is genuinely rare. For Kangaro, almost nothing in the stapler and paper punch category would qualify here, since the core function of these products has existed for over a century. This is worth flagging directly in discussion: a mature manufacturing category like stationery is structurally unlikely to produce new-to-the-world products, and that is a useful starting observation rather than a criticism.

2. New product lines
These are new products that allow a company to enter an established market for the first time, a market that already exists and already has competitors, but one the company itself has never played in before. Philips developing a flat TV to target a new segment of an already crowded CTV market is the standard example. If Kangaro were to enter, say, the electronic or smart office device space, or a category like premium writing instruments it currently does not compete in, it would sit here.

3. Additions to existing product lines
These are products that supplement a company's already existing list of products. McDonald's introducing a pudina-flavoured burger for Indian consumers is the textbook example, since it is not a new category for McDonald's, just an addition within a category it already operates in. This is likely where a large share of Kangaro's actual product launches sit. A new tacker variant aimed at an industrial buyer, or a new punch model with a different hole capacity, extends the existing range without creating a new category.

4. Improvements and revisions of existing products
These are new products that replace existing ones by offering improved performance or greater perceived value, with Microsoft replacing MS-DOS with the more user-friendly, graphical Windows interface as the classic example. An ergonomic redesign of an existing stapler model, one that keeps the same core function but improves grip comfort or reduces the force needed to staple, would sit squarely in this category. Given what we know about Kangaro's ergonomics-led R&D philosophy, this is probably where a significant share of its innovation spend actually goes.

5. Repositioning
This involves taking existing products and targeting them at new markets or new customer segments that the product was not originally aimed at, without necessarily changing the product itself in any major way. For Kangaro, this could look like taking an existing stapler design already sold to retail consumers and repositioning it toward a premium corporate gifting segment, or taking an industrial-grade tacker and repositioning it for a new export market where it currently has no presence.

6. Cost Reduction
These are products that deliver the same performance as an existing product but at a lower cost. Booz, Allen and Hamilton themselves described these as products that simply replace

existing items in the line, giving the consumer similar performance but at a lower price point, and noted that these may be more of a "new product" in terms of design or production changes than in terms of marketing. Given Kangaro's vertically integrated manufacturing and in-house tooling, this is a category where the company likely has a genuine structural advantage. Controlling its own component supply chain gives it more levers to pull on cost than a competitor who outsources.

Why this matters for the Kangaro discussion

The two dimensions underlying this whole classification are simply how new the product is to the *market* versus how new it is to the *company*. Plotting Kangaro's actual product launches across these six boxes should reveal a pattern, and the working hypothesis from the pre-read still holds: expect the bulk of activity clustered in categories three, four, and six (additions, improvements, and cost reduction), with very little in categories one and two. The discussion-worthy question is whether that concentration is the right strategic posture for a company facing global competition or whether it signals underinvestment in the riskier, more differentiating categories further up the list.

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5. New product development at Kangaro: what actually happens

Kangaro's R&D operates out of a dedicated centre in New Delhi. This centre is described as well equipped, with an ultra-modern tool room that has the latest facilities, machinery, and equipment required to develop quality tooling, jigs, and fixtures, staffed by over 200 quality engineers whose stated purpose is to provide innovation and design breakthroughs that simplify everyday use while meeting the company's quality benchmarks. This is a meaningful detail. A 200-person quality and R&D engineering team is a significant investment for a company in this category, and it signals that Kangaro treats new product development as a core capability rather than an occasional project.

The emphasis on ergonomics deserves attention too, because it tells you where Kangaro's competitive differentiation actually lives. In a category where the core function, does the stapler staple, does the punch punch, is essentially solved and commoditised, the remaining

space for genuine innovation is in the experience of using the product: how much force it takes, how comfortable the grip is, how the device fits a hand across different user groups, and how durable it is under repeated daily use in an office or school setting. This is where a company differentiates without needing a technological breakthrough.

It is worth pairing this with what we know about vertical integration. Because Kangaro manufactures its own tooling, jigs, and fixtures in-house rather than outsourcing that work, the company controls the entire pipeline from concept sketch to working prototype to mass production tooling. This shortens the iteration loop between a design idea and a testable physical prototype, which matters enormously in NPD, where speed of iteration is often a better predictor of success than the brilliance of the first idea.

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6. Where NPD and exports intersect

The most interesting part of this agenda is not NPD or exports in isolation; it is the feedback loop between them. A company that is developing new products purely for the domestic Indian market and a company that is developing new products for over 100 export markets simultaneously face very different design constraints. Global buyers bring different ergonomic expectations, different regulatory and safety certification requirements, different paper size standards, and different price points depending on the market's purchasing power. This means Kangaro's R&D function almost certainly cannot design in a vacuum. Export market intelligence has to feed back into the Stage-Gate process itself, likely shaping which product concepts even make it past the earliest gates.

The OEM business adds another layer of complexity worth exploring directly. When Kangaro manufactures a product to be sold under another company's brand, the NPD process is partly dictated by that partner's specifications rather than Kangaro's own R&D team's independent judgement. This raises a genuine strategic tension: does the OEM business, which is presumably a reliable and substantial revenue stream, end up crowding out R&D bandwidth and design ownership that could otherwise go toward building the Kangaro brand's own distinctive product identity globally? This tension between OEM-driven, partner-specified development and brand-driven, internally conceived development is a rich vein for discussion

and maps well onto the make-versus-brand tension many Indian manufacturers face as they scale exports.

7. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Vertical integration	Manufacturing every component and stage of a product in-house, from raw parts like springs and rivets to full assembly, rather than outsourcing to external suppliers.
New-to-the-world product	A product that creates an entirely new market that didn't previously exist; the highest-risk, highest-reward category in the Booz, Allen and Hamilton classification.
New product line	A product that lets a company enter an already-existing market it has never competed in before.
Addition to an existing product line	A new product that extends a company's current range within a category it already operates in, without creating a new category.
Improvement/revision of an existing product	A product that replaces an existing one by offering better performance or perceived value, while keeping the same core function.
Repositioning	Marketing an existing, largely unchanged product to a new market segment or customer group it wasn't originally targeted at.
Cost reduction product	A product offering similar performance to an existing one but at a lower cost, often driven more by production and design changes than by marketing.
Range architecture	The deliberate structuring of a company's product variants to serve different buyer segments (retail, corporate, government, education) with different needs and price sensitivities.
OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) business	Manufacturing a product to another company's specifications, to be sold under that partner's own brand rather than the manufacturer's.
Ergonomics-led R&D	An innovation approach focused on improving product comfort, ease of use, and physical fit for the user, rather than changing a product's core function.
Export market intelligence	Knowledge about foreign buyers' regulatory, ergonomic, sizing, and pricing requirements, used to shape product design decisions before launch.
KGOC	Kangaro Group of Companies, the umbrella structure under which Kangaro Industries Limited and related entities like Kanin (India) and Munix (India) operate.

8. Guiding Questions

1. Kangaro's R&D centre is described as ergonomics-led. Can leadership walk through a specific example where a real user complaint or ergonomic problem was traced through to a specific product change?
2. Does the OEM business, manufacturing to a partner's specifications, end up crowding out R&D time and design ownership that could otherwise build Kangaro's own brand identity in export markets, or do the two actually reinforce each other?
3. Global buyers bring different ergonomic standards, safety certifications, and paper-size requirements. How early does that export market intelligence actually enter the NPD process, at the concept stage, or only after a product is already largely designed?
4. Given how deep Kangaro's vertical integration goes, down to springs and rivets, is that primarily a cost-reduction advantage, a quality-control advantage, or a speed-of-iteration advantage for NPD, and which of the three actually matters most to the business today?
5. The domestic market is split across retail, corporate, government, and education buyers with different needs. Does export market segmentation follow a similar logic, or is Kangaro treating "the export market" as one undifferentiated block?

9. Resources to go through before immersion:

1. Kangaro Group from Ludhiana, India | About Us
2. The Company
3. Kangaro® | KGOC | Corporate Journey

10. Sources

1. Booz, Allen and Hamilton. *New Product Management for the 1980s*. Booz, Allen & Hamilton Inc., 1982. (Original source of the six-category new product classification.)
2. "The Company." Kangaro official site. https://www.kangaro.com/company/
3. "About Kangaro." KGOC official site. https://www.kangarokgoc.com/Home/Content?ID=1
4. "Kangaro Group — Stationery Staplers & Staplers from Ludhiana." IndiaMART. https://www.indiamart.com/kangaro-group/
5. "Kangaro Industries Limited." CRISIL Ratings. https://www.crisilratings.com/mnt/winshare/Ratings/RatingList/RatingDocs/KangaroIndustriesLimited_December%2018_%202024_RR_359323.html