

Design Narratives 4

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Roll it Toy Snake

This was the time, IDC conflict with IITB had reached a peak. IDC was initially constituted as an independent 'Institute of Design' by MHRD (that time Ministry of Education.) Ministry had asked IITB to house IDC for first 5 years! IIT was quite impressed with the role of 'Industrial Design' in reaching Technology to the Society. IITB wanted IDC to continue as a Centre. But due to certain personality clashes Prof Adarkar, who was appointed as an advisor to IDC by IITB at the instance of Ministry could not continue. His term as 'Advisor' was not extended by IITB on the ground of his age. He was 65! IDC faculty, all of us(4) were in favour of IDC becoming an independent Institute and had made several representations to Board of Governness as well as Ministry! It was a uncertain phase of IDC. We were rebellious! Due to these uncertainties one batch was not taken. in the initial years it was a Diploma of 15 months, which use to get extended for 18months!

We were preparing to leave IDC.

MSG Rajan had tentatively fixed an accommodation for me in Matunga with his friends. UAA had his home in Girgaon. We had formed a company called ID group. That is the time I designed the Roll it toy snake!

We wanted to design and survive!

One way was to produce your own designs!

The toy was a simple with wooden rollers. It could take many positions. It could be made in turned wood. We were also exploring the possibility of making it in, blow moulding or injection moulding!. When we worked out the costing in wood, each painted roller come to more than Rs.1- 60 or at that time. With 8 rollers the cost looked prohibitive to make in wood! So we approached Nanavati toys, well known for their plastic toys at that time. Young Nanavati, nephew of the owner was an architect. We had a good meeting. We showed him the 'Roll it snake Toy. He liked it.

Then he explained how they go about it.

The company had more than 50 plastic toys of their own. All were mostly injection moulded. But they also marketed other's products with Nanavati brand name. He will give an order for 5000 pieces initially if the price we offer is viable! He would double the price and market it. Package will be their responsibility including design and production! Before placing the order, they would evaluate the product by showing to select customers. This would take 2 to 3 weeks. You have to leave the new prototypes with them for 3 weeks! If it is sellable, initial order will be placed. If they get negative feed-back, they will return the product! They had select toy shops toy all over the country to whom they supply. They had employed '2' marketers who will

visit these toy shops and give the 'toys' as per the orders! Mr. Nanavati said they can always persuade these shops to buy few new designs! Thus they would be able to sell off first 5000 pieces. The product will be sold as Nanavati toy!! They may mention our name but address on the package will be theirs. Subsequently if the toy picks up, the orders will be placed for next 5000. So we have to invest and produce on our own at least 5000 pieces.

It looked like an interesting proposition! Only problem was that we had not registered or patented. So if the company says after '3' weeks that it is not sellable and doesn't place the order, we are at stuck! We did not know whether we could trust them! They can easily make a similar toy after rejecting ours! We could do nothing about it! So we did not proceed. But it was a great learning.

To become a new entrepreneur you need control on the distribution!

And you need to protect the intellectual property! Copying is a common phenomenon in the Indian scene!
