The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

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**Introduction**

Changes approval processes are designed to ensure that modifications to systems, infrastructure, or workflows are properly vetted before implementation. While these processes aim to reduce risk and maintain stability, they can also introduce significant drawbacks that hinder agility, innovation, and operational efficiency. This paper explores the dangers associated with rigid or poorly designed change approval mechanisms, particularly in IT and DevOps environments.

**Slowed Time-to-Market**

Heavy change approval processes often delay deployments, especially when approvals are centralized or require multiple layers of sign off. Bureaucratic change approvals are negatively correlated with deployment frequency and lead time, slowing down software delivery and reducing responsiveness to market demands.

**Increased Risk of Failure**

Ironically, the processes that are meant to reduce risk can often create it. The 2019 state of DevOps Report found that external approvals had no positive output with change success rates and were associated with higher fail rates. (Abbas,2023).

**Developer Frustration and Talent Drain**

Rigid approval workflows can demoralize development teams. Development often view CABs and Request for Change (RFC) procedures as unnecessary hurdles. Over time, this frustration can lead to decreased productivity and even attrition of top talent. Organizations risk losing their most innovative contributors to more agile competitors.

**Conclusion**

While change approval processes are essential for governance and risk mitigation, they must be carefully designed to avoid becoming bottlenecks. Organizations should consider decentralized approvals, automated workflows, and continuous feedback mechanisms to balance control with agility. By doing so, they can foster innovation, retain talent, and improve overall change success rates.

**Resources:**

Abbas, T. (January,2023). Change Approval Process in ITIL Change Management.ChangemanagementInsight.

Retrieved from: [Change Approval Process in ITIL Change Management](https://changemanagementinsight.com/change-approval-process-in-itil-change-management/)

CIOHUB. (August,2023). The limitations of change management: understanding the challenges. CIOHUB.

Retrieved from: [The Limitations of Change Management: Understanding the Challenges | CIO Insight Hub](https://ciohub.org/post/2023/08/the-limitations-of-change-management-understanding-the-challenges/)