Ryan Norrbom

CSD380

Assignment 8.2

September 27th, 2024

Hidden Dangers of Change Approvals

In our software-driven world, organizations are faced with the challenge of rapidly evolving while creating measures to mitigate risks. Change approval processes are designed as an intentional step to manage and control modifications within a company, assuring that any alterations align with strategic objectives and do not introduce unnecessary risks. However, these processes can also introduce considerable dangers that may inhibit progress, innovation, and even the excitement necessary for continuous innovation.

First, bureaucratic delay could harm development. Lengthy approval processes slow down the implementation of changes. For example, the process may require several layers of approval or land on someone not versed in the solution for the change approval. Either of these can cause delays in getting the necessary approval. The process becomes unwieldy when multiple management layers are involved or approval requires extensive documentation and meetings. This delay can be incredibly detrimental in industries where agility is paramount, causing the organization to miss out on timely opportunities or fail to address pressing issues promptly.

Next, the stifling of innovation is of concern with complex change approval processes. Uncompromising processes discourage employees from proposing new ideas or solutions. Furthermore, the change approval process may limit a developer's vision by having limited options as they won't want to deal with the bureaucracy of modifying or justifying innovative solutions. If team members believe their suggestions will get lost in a sea of paperwork or will be rejected without fair consideration, they may become less inclined to contribute creatively. This environment can lead to stagnation, where the organization relies solely on existing methods and fails to evolve.

Organizations may also suffer from a culture that creates decision-making bottlenecks. Centralized approval processes place significant power in the hands of a few individuals or committees, whether they are knowledgeable on the market or not. For example, the Portland Venture Capital Market missed out on investing in a company called HiddenLayer because they did not believe that AI model security would be in demand. Their skillset left them out of a funding round that exceeded fifty million dollars and a company that now has their technology available natively in Microsoft Azure. This concentration can lead to biased decisions, where personal preferences or a lack of understanding about specific issues affect the outcome. Furthermore, if key approvers are unavailable or overburdened, changes may be delayed indefinitely, or the opportunity to enter a market is missed.

Finally, excessive focus on formal approval can result in overlooking practical insights from front-line employees. Those directly involved in day-to-day operations often have valuable viewpoints on what changes are necessary. When the approval process does not sufficiently incorporate their input or that of other stakeholders, the organization risks implementing ineffective, underutilized, or counterproductive changes. These strict change approval processes can foster a culture of risk aversion and failure. While assessing potential risks is consequential, an overemphasis can prevent the organization from taking calculated risks that could lead to significant rewards or the ability for the organization to compete and adapt. This cautious approach may protect against immediate threats but can sabotage long-term growth and ideation.

To address these dangers, organizations should consider the following strategies:

1. Simplify approval procedures by reducing unnecessary steps and allowing teams more autonomy for certain changes.
2. Foster a culture where employees feel comfortable sharing ideas without fear of hierarchal obstacles.
3. Disseminate authority to make decisions closer to where the expertise lies.
4. Develop a balanced method that enables users to weigh potential risks against the benefits of innovation.
5. Regularly assess the efficacy of the change approval processes and implement a continuous improvement procedure.

In conclusion, change approval processes are paramount for maintaining organizational control, alignment, and risk management. Although, it is vital to recognize the intrinsic dangers they can present. Organizations should proactively address and monitor issues such as delays, innovation stifling, decision-making bottlenecks, overlooked insights, and excessive risk aversion. Organizations can effectively implement change approval in alignment with their organizational goals. Furthermore, they can create a more dynamic and responsive environment while limiting the risks involved in their industry. Ultimately, refining these processes enables a balance between necessary oversight and the flexibility required to thrive in a constantly changing business landscape.

**References**:

14, M., Daly, C., & minutes, 3. (2023, June 13). *6 reasons change management in government is challenging*. ThoughtExchange. https://thoughtexchange.com/blog/change-management-government/

*3 most common change management problems*. Ricoh USA. (n.d.). https://www.ricoh-usa.com/en/insights/articles/the-3-most-common-change-management-problems

Emerson, M. S. (2024, February 2). *7 reasons why change management strategies fail and how to avoid them - professional & executive development: Harvard DCE*. Professional & Executive Development | Harvard DCE. https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/7-reasons-why-change-management-strategies-fail-and-how-to-avoid-them/

Kim, G., Debois, P., Willis, J., Humble, J., Forsgren, N., & Allspaw, J. (2021). *The devops handbook: How to create world-class agility, reliability, & Security in Technology Organizations*. IT Revolution Press, LLC.