**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

Change is an inevitable and often necessary component of organizational growth and adaptation. While structured change approval processes are designed to mitigate as much risk as possible, ensure compliance, and maintain stability, an overly rigid or inefficient implementation can introduce significant dangers. Instead of instilling controlled progress, these processes can become some of the worst bureaucratic bottlenecks that stifle innovation, erode morale, and ultimately destroy an organization's ability to compete in a dynamic environment.

One of the most prominent dangers of an overbearing change approval process is slowed time-to-market and reduced agility. In today's fast-paced world, organizations need to adapt quickly to new market conditions, customer demands, and technological advancements. Lengthy approval workflows, characterized by multiple layers of review and manual handoffs, can drastically delay the implementation of critical changes. This bureaucratic inertia means that by the time a change is finally approved and deployed, the opportunity it aimed to seize may have passed, or the problem it sought to solve may have escalated. As LaunchDarkly points out, studies, including the State of DevOps 2019 Report, have shown a direct correlation between heavyweight change approval processes and worse software delivery and operational performance, actually increasing risk rather than decreasing it.

Beyond the delays, excessive bureaucracy in change management can lead to decreased productivity and innovation. When every minor adjustment or improvement requires extensive documentation, multiple sign-offs, and prolonged waiting periods, employees, particularly those in development or operational roles, become frustrated and disengaged. This "change fatigue" can demoralize teams and lead to a culture where individuals are less likely to propose new ideas or improvements, fearing the arduous approval journey. As the Agile Academy notes, "unnecessary approvals, endless meetings, outdated processes that no one questions" can drain productivity and stifle innovation. When employees feel disempowered and their autonomy is limited by institutionalized barriers to risk-taking, the organization's ability to experiment and innovate is significantly hampered.

Also, cumbersome change approval processes can have significant human and financial costs. Prosci highlights that poorly managed change can lead to project delays and budget overruns due to unexpected resistance and the need for rework. In the long term, it can result in sustained productivity declines, decreased work quality, and missed efficiency gains. Perhaps most critically, a frustrating change environment can lead to the loss of valued employees, as high-performing individuals may seek more agile and empowering workplaces. Replacing these employees incurs substantial recruiting and training costs, further impacting the organization's bottom line. The cost of excessive bureaucracy extends beyond salaries; as Becker's Hospital Review notes, the U.S. economy alone wastes over $3 trillion annually on excessive bureaucracy, much of which stems from inefficient processes that consume time, energy, and resources without adding value.

In conclusion, while change approval processes are vital for maintaining order and managing risk, their improper implementation can be detrimental. Organizations must carefully balance control with agility, seeking to streamline workflows, empower employees, and foster a culture that embraces calculated risk-taking and continuous improvement. By doing so, they can transform change management from a potential danger into a strategic advantage, enabling them to adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.

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