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DevOps

Module 8.2 Assignment

The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

Introduction

To really understand the dangers, it helps to first look at what a typical change approval process usually involves. Usually, when teams want to make a change to a system, whether it is fixing a bug, adding a new feature, or updating something, they usually have to go through a few formal steps first. According to Approveit (2024), the idea is that a change request gets documented, reviewed, and approved by someone higher up before anything can move forward. The reasoning behind this process is mostly about making sure the change is safe, does not cause bigger problems, and keeps the system running smoothly. On the surface, it sounds reasonable. Of course, nobody wants a system to crash because of a rushed change.

At the same time, organizations usually have change approval processes because they want to protect themselves from mistakes, avoid penalties, and show that they have some kind of control in place. According to *The DevOps Handbook* (Kim et al., 2021), many companies put heavy approval processes in place because they fear regulatory trouble or major outages. However, even though the intention is good, the way many companies manage change approvals can actually create bigger problems.

The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

While the original goal of a change approval process is to make systems safer, the reality is that in many cases it makes things worse. One major danger is that it slows everything down. According to DORA (n.d.), companies that use long manual approval processes actually have

lower performance. Waiting around for approvals creates bottlenecks and prevents teams from moving quickly. In a world where companies need to release updates fast to stay competitive, this delay can cause serious harm.

Another danger is that it gives a false sense of security. Just because someone signs off on a change does not mean the change is actually safe. According to Betz (2021), manual approval processes often become a box-checking activity rather than a real quality control system. Teams end up spending more time trying to meet documentation requirements than actually making sure the code is good. It becomes more about passing the approval stage than building something stable.

On top of that, heavy approval processes can kill innovation. As a developer, knowing that every single change has to pass through slow and complicated steps can definitely make one less willing to take risks or try something new. According to Long (2023), in regulated environments where change control is rigid, teams often grow so afraid of failing that they stop pushing for improvements altogether. That kind of fear is dangerous because it allows competitors who are willing to move fast and learn quickly to pull ahead.

The biggest irony of all is that trying to reduce risk by putting in rigid approvals can actually increase risk. According to *The DevOps Handbook* (Kim et al., 2021), slower processes means larger batches of changes get released at once, making it harder to catch mistakes early. Instead of deploying small, low-risk changes frequently, teams are forced into making bigger, riskier releases. This can cause major outages and system failures when something goes wrong. It is almost like creating the exact problem the approval process was supposed to prevent.

Considering all the possible dangers of a change approval process, it is important to point out how the process can become a roadblock instead of an asset. According to Approveit (2024), chaotic approval systems usually grow when companies just keep adding more steps, more

managers, and more paperwork every time something bad happens. They do it with good intentions, but the result is an overly complicated process that nobody really trusts. People also start looking for shortcuts, or they hide mistakes because they are afraid of the slow, painful approval process. At that point, the system is not just broken, it is dangerous.

Conclusion

Even though it might sound like change approval processes are the villain here, they are not inherently bad. According to DORA (n.d.), the problem is that most companies fail to modernize them. Instead of improving how approvals happen, organizations often stick to the same bureaucratic checklists just to meet audit requirements or regulatory standards, without really thinking about whether the process actually protects users or systems.

A good change approval process does exist though. According to Betz (2021), the best systems are automated, decentralized, and tied into a well-built deployment pipeline. Instead of having managers sign of manually, good systems use automated tests, peer reviews, and continuous monitoring to reduce risk. According to *The DevOps Handbook* (Kim et al., 2021), automation allows teams to move faster while keeping quality high, and it encourages safe experimentation. In short, a strong process is one that builds trust through data and testing, not signatures and forms. Taking all into consideration, a healthy change approval process is one that empowers teams to move quickly, learn from mistakes and still protect users. It should not be a wall that blocks progress. It should be a guardrail that keeps everything on track.

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