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Assignment 8.2

**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

Change approval processes are fundamental components of organizational change management strategies, designed to ensure that modifications to systems, procedures, or policies are properly evaluated before implementation. However, these processes can introduce significant risks and challenges that may undermine their intended benefits. This paper examines the various dangers associated with change approval processes and their potential impact on organizational effectiveness.

**Bureaucratic Bottlenecks and Delayed Implementation**

One of the most significant dangers of change approval processes is the creation of bureaucratic bottlenecks that can severely delay critical changes. When approval workflows become overly complex or involve too many stakeholders, organizations may experience "analysis paralysis" where decisions are postponed indefinitely (Harvard Professional Development, n.d.). This delay can be particularly problematic in fast-paced business environments where rapid adaptation is essential for maintaining competitive advantage.

The cascading effect of delayed approvals can extend beyond the immediate change, affecting dependent processes and creating a backlog of pending modifications. As noted by change management experts, "When approval processes become too rigid, they can stifle innovation and prevent organizations from responding quickly to market changes" (Harvard Professional Development, n.d.).

**Reduced Employee Engagement and Innovation**

Excessive change approval processes can significantly impact employee morale and engagement. When employees perceive that their ideas and suggestions are subject to lengthy approval cycles, they may become discouraged from proposing improvements or innovations. This creates a culture where employees are less likely to take initiative or think creatively about process improvements.

The psychological impact of bureaucratic approval processes extends beyond individual motivation. Teams may develop a "wait-and-see" attitude, where they hesitate to implement changes or improvements until formal approval is received, even for minor modifications that could enhance productivity or customer satisfaction.

**Increased Risk of Change Fatigue**

Change approval processes can contribute to organizational change fatigue, particularly when they are perceived as unnecessary obstacles rather than value-adding safeguards. When employees experience repeated delays or rejections of proposed changes, they may develop resistance to future change initiatives, making it more difficult for organizations to implement necessary transformations.

This fatigue can manifest in various ways, including decreased participation in change initiatives, skepticism about management's commitment to improvement, and reduced willingness to support organizational transformations. The cumulative effect can create a toxic environment where change becomes increasingly difficult to implement successfully.

**Resource Drain and Opportunity Costs**

Complex approval processes require significant organizational resources, including time, personnel, and administrative overhead. Each approval step consumes valuable resources that could be allocated to other strategic initiatives. The opportunity cost of maintaining elaborate approval workflows can be substantial, particularly when the benefits of the approval process do not outweigh the associated costs.

Organizations must carefully balance the need for oversight with the efficiency requirements of their operations. When approval processes become too resource-intensive, they can actually impede organizational performance rather than enhance it.

**Potential for Decision Paralysis**

Change approval processes can create decision paralysis, especially when multiple stakeholders have conflicting priorities or when the approval criteria are unclear. This paralysis can result in important changes being indefinitely postponed or abandoned altogether, even when they would provide significant benefits to the organization.

The risk of decision paralysis is particularly high in organizations with complex governance structures or when approval processes involve multiple departments with different objectives and priorities. This can lead to situations where changes that would benefit the organization as a whole are blocked by individual stakeholders protecting their own interests.

**Mitigation Strategies**

To address these dangers, organizations should implement several mitigation strategies. First, they should establish clear criteria for when formal approval processes are necessary versus when changes can be implemented through streamlined procedures. This includes creating different approval levels based on the scope and impact of proposed changes.

Second, organizations should implement time limits for approval processes to prevent indefinite delays. As suggested by change management strategists, "Setting clear timelines for approval decisions helps prevent bottlenecks and ensures that changes are evaluated in a timely manner" (Change Strategists, n.d.).

Third, organizations should provide training and support to employees involved in approval processes to ensure they understand the criteria and can make informed decisions efficiently. This includes establishing clear communication channels and feedback mechanisms.

**Conclusion**

While change approval processes serve important functions in ensuring quality and managing risk, they can introduce significant dangers when not properly designed and managed. Organizations must carefully balance the need for oversight with the requirements for agility and innovation. By implementing appropriate mitigation strategies and regularly reviewing the effectiveness of their approval processes, organizations can minimize the risks while maintaining the benefits of structured change management.

The key to successful change approval processes lies in finding the right balance between control and flexibility, ensuring that processes enhance rather than impede organizational effectiveness. Organizations that can achieve this balance will be better positioned to adapt to changing market conditions while maintaining the quality and consistency of their operations.

**References**

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