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Mod 8.2

**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

Change approval processes, while essential for managing risks and ensuring compliance, can introduce significant challenges and dangers when not implemented effectively. This paper explores the key dangers associated with change approval processes, supported by insights from various sources.

**Inefficiencies and Delays**

One of the primary dangers of rigid change approval processes is inefficiency. Traditional change management often involves complex, bureaucratic procedures that require multiple levels of approval. These processes can create significant delays, especially when approvals must be sought from individuals who are not directly involved with or knowledgeable about the specific changes being proposed. This delay in approvals not only slows down the implementation of necessary changes but can also lead to missed opportunities and increased costs. According to a DZone article, such inefficiencies result in a ninefold increase in delays compared to streamlined processes with fewer approval layers (Stahnke, 2021).

**Misaligned Incentives and Resistance**

Change approval processes can exacerbate the divide between development and operations teams, leading to misaligned incentives. Developers are often incentivized to push changes rapidly to improve functionality and user experience, while operations teams prioritize system stability and uptime. When approval processes favor one group's incentives over the other, it can cause friction, resistance to change, and ultimately, failed projects. This misalignment can lead to a slower adoption rate and lower overall efficiency (Stahnke, 2021; Prosci, 2022).

**Costs of Poorly Managed Change**

The costs associated with poorly managed change approval processes are substantial. At the project level, these costs include delays, missed milestones, budget overruns, and the need for rework. Additionally, projects may suffer from resistance, unexpected obstacles, and the risk of being put on hold or abandoned altogether. On an organizational level, poor change management can lead to productivity declines, loss of valued employees, reduced quality of work, and negative impacts on customer and supplier relationships. These issues highlight the importance of effective change management as a risk mitigation strategy and a method for avoiding significant financial and operational costs (Prosci, 2022).

**Overcoming the Challenges**

To mitigate the dangers associated with change approval processes, organizations can adopt several best practices. By standardizing deployment practices and utilizing automation tools, organizations can reduce the complexity and duration of approval processes. This approach not only speeds up changes but also enhances consistency and reliability (Stahnke, 2021). Shortening feedback cycles and minimizing manual reviews in favor of automated systems can help teams stay on course and make necessary adjustments in real-time. Continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD) tools are particularly effective in this regard (Stahnke, 2021). Rather than attempting massive overhauls, organizations should focus on smaller, more manageable changes delivered frequently. This strategy helps maintain momentum, ensures stakeholder buy-in, and reduces the risk of project failures (Stahnke, 2021). Effective communication across teams is crucial for successful change management. Breaking down silos and fostering collaboration between development and operations teams can align incentives and facilitate smoother change implementation (Stahnke, 2021; Prosci, 2022).

**Conclusion**

While change approval processes are necessary for managing risks and ensuring compliance, they can pose significant dangers if not managed effectively. Inefficiencies, misaligned incentives, and high costs are among the primary challenges associated with traditional change management practices. By adopting standardized, automated processes, focusing on smaller changes, and improving communication, organizations can overcome these challenges and implement changes more effectively. This approach not only mitigates risks but also enhances overall productivity and organizational resilience.

References

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