**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

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As we all know, it is incredibly important to review code and control the changes into production. However, a company can go too far with the change management process and actually end up hindering their business. This can be done with an overbearing review process or requiring an unnecessary amount of authorization. This sort of change management may ensure that code delivers intended results, but at the cost of increasing lead times at an exorbitant rate.

Why do we have change management in the first place? Change management is a crucial aspect of software development, as it helps cut down on overlooked errors and thus reduces downtime and poor user experience. Unreviewed code is much more likely to introduce errors or system failures than reviewed code. Change management is the last check for any unintended results before pushing the change into production. Without it, a key step of reviewing code is lost.

Change management helps ensure that the proposed change is well documented, authorized, and ready for production. It can achieve this in several ways, such as requiring a change request form to be filled out before submitting the change or requiring several layers of authorization to be submitted. For example, a change request form could outline code standards and require that the change adheres to them, or it could be a checklist for the developer to look over to ensure that the change is ready for production. Several authorizers’ approval could include a senior developer, the VP of operations, or even stakeholder’s approval.

So, if change management is so integral to the production of development, where lies the danger? The danger is when change management becomes so convoluted and strict that it kills any and all efficiency and inflates lead times. Outdated and inefficient approval methods, misaligned incentives, poor communication, siloed teams, and a lack of a standard change method can all lead to a failure of change management. This can not only hurt the company as changes take longer and longer to implement, but it also lowers developer morale and delivers a poor user experience.

Now that we know the dangers, we can avoid them with several key improvements. 1. Standardize the deployment process and tools. This helps speed up the overall process and decreases the complexity of deployments. 2. Release small batch changes frequently. This helps the approval process move quickly by making the code more understandable and digestible. 3. Get feedback fast. This helps the developer fix any issues before other developers introduce conflicting changes. 4. Automate processes. Any process that doesn’t need to be manual should be automated. This greatly reduces the overall lead time and deployment process.

As we can see, change management is integral to software development. Without it, the system is at an increased risk of failure and thus the business is at risk of client dissatisfaction. However, lead times can get bogged down with a lengthy bureaucratic change management process which delivers a poor user experience. As with all things, there is a balance between the two that companies must navigate. With the guidance outlined above, change management can both ensure that changes meet quality standards while also maintaining efficiency to allow changes to enter production in a timely manner.

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