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12/06/2024
Module 8.2 Assignment

The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

A change approval process is a system that organizations use to review and authorize proposed changes to systems, applications, and infrastructure. These processes start with good intentions, but as we will see in this paper, sometimes things go wrong.

DORA published one article about the pitfalls of change approval processes: <https://dora.dev/capabilities/streamlining-change-approval/>. First, reliance on a centralized Change Approval Board (CAB) can cause delays and errors as the board might need more understanding of the changes. While CABs are suitable for broadcasting change, their distance from the actual work can be a drawback. Treating all changes equally makes the approval process inefficient. Different changes have varying risk profiles and timings, requiring various levels of attention. Failing to apply continuous improvement means not targeting key performance metrics like lead time and change fail rate for process improvements. Providing teams with the right tools and training is essential. Finally, responding to problems by adding more processes can worsen issues. More processes and approvals increase lead times and batch sizes, creating a vicious cycle. Instead, focus on making it quicker and safer to implement changes.

LaunchDarkly expands on this topic by discussing the downsides of heavy change management:

<https://launchdarkly.com/guides/reconciling-change-management-and-continuous-delivery/the-downsides-of-heavy-change-management/>. Change management can delay feature development, leading to wasted resources if customers don't like the results. It's better to ship small changes early and often to gather user feedback quickly. Bureaucratic change approval processes are linked to worse software delivery and operational (SDO) performance. High SDO

performers who streamline change processes meet key business targets more effectively. Forrester published a report in 2020 based on surveys that shows that organizations with streamlined change processes report superior business performance. Developers often find change management processes burdensome. Inefficient processes can reduce their passion and productivity, leading to higher turnover rates and difficulty retaining talent.

Finally, Octopus published an article about why change approval boards don't work: <https://octopus.com/blog/change-advisory-boards-dont-work>. Change approval boards (CABs) can introduce delays and errors, as they may not fully understand the implications of the changes. CABs negatively affect lead time, deployment frequency, and restore time without improving change fail rates. CABs increase lead times by delaying updates through formal approval processes, leading to higher work in process (WIP) and poorer quality. CABs create bottlenecks by reviewing many changes in single batches, resulting in larger, riskier deployments and higher chances of failure. The added bureaucratic layer of CABs can frustrate developers and decrease their productivity, impacting overall business performance.

Change approval processes can introduce delays and inefficiencies. Reliance on CABs can complicate the change process. It's essential to simplify procedures and focus on rapid feedback to mitigate risks and foster productivity and innovation.