**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

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Module 8.2 Assignment: The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

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In software development and IT operations, change is constant and necessary for innovation, security, and user satisfaction. Traditionally, organizations have relied on formal change approval processes to ensure that modifications to systems, infrastructure, and applications are appropriately evaluated and evaluated. While these processes are intended to minimize risk and provide quality, emerging research and DevOps practices have highlighted a darker side: overly rigid or complicated change approval procedures can harm productivity, delay innovation, and even increase the risk of failure. This paper explores the hidden dangers of traditional change approval processes, using insights from industry sources to propose a more streamlined, automated, and collaborative approach.

**The Illusion of Risk Mitigation**

One of the primary justifications for change approval processes is risk management. The assumption is that organizations can catch errors before they reach production by requiring approvals from management or a Change Advisory Board (CAB). However, studies show that this assumption may be flawed. According to Dora, “manual approval processes have no significant impact on reducing change failure rates” and instead introduce unnecessary delays and bottlenecks (Dora, n.d.). Relying on manual approval may offer a false sense of security while doing little to improve outcomes. Change requests often pass through multiple layers of non-technical approvers who lack context or urgency, increasing the likelihood of rubber-stamping without adding value.

**Bottlenecks to Innovation**

In fast-moving industries, time-to-market is critical. Yet, traditional approval processes can become procedural bottlenecks. CMW Lab (2025) noted that “manual approvals cause unnecessary delays, especially when decisions depend on a limited number of stakeholders.” These delays can prevent teams from delivering updates quickly, patching security vulnerabilities, or responding to user feedback promptly. For example, a development team ready to push a hotfix may be forced to wait days or weeks for approval, potentially exposing customers to ongoing issues. This inefficiency not only frustrates developers but can erode user trust and satisfaction.

**Cultural and Psychological Impacts**

Rigid approval systems can also create cultural challenges within DevOps teams. When developers feel constrained by red tape, they may lose motivation or look for ways to bypass the system altogether. Furthermore, a centralized approval board can undermine a shared ownership and accountability culture, replacing it with blame avoidance. N-Able (2025) highlights how “centralized control often leads to siloed teams and reduced collaboration,” which contradicts DevOps principles of continuous delivery and cross-functional cooperation. Ultimately, these psychological effects can lead to lower morale, reduced productivity, and increased turnover.

**Modern Alternatives: Automation and Policy-Based Governance**

Leading organizations are turning to automated approval systems and policy-based governance. Computerized systems use pre-due to overcome these challenges. They use defined criteria (such as successful test results or low-risk categorization) to approve changes without human intervention; this speeds up deployment and improves consistency and traceability. According to CMW Lab (2025), automation reduces human error and makes it easier to comply with auditing requirements. Meanwhile, modern DevOps platforms enable teams to integrate change approval into their CI/CD pipelines, allowing faster and safer deployments without sacrificing accountability.

**Conclusion**

While change approval processes are essential for managing risk and ensuring reliability, traditional manual methods are increasingly considered outdated and counterproductive in today’s DevOps-driven world. Research from Dora, CMW Lab, and N-Able demonstrated that overly rigid or bureaucratic approval procedures can delay innovation, reduce team autonomy, and fail to deliver on their promise of safety. By embracing automation, policy-as-code, and continuous delivery practices, organizations can achieve a more agile, secure, and responsive change management system that supports rather than hinders the goals of modern IT.

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