**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

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Change approval processes are integral to IT and software development environments, ensuring that modifications to systems, applications, or configurations are reviewed and authorized before implementation. These processes are designed to mitigate risks, maintain system stability, and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. By providing a structured framework for evaluating proposed changes, they help prevent unintended consequences that could arise from poorly planned or inadequately tested modifications.

However, despite their importance, change approval processes can introduce significant challenges and drawbacks. One of the primary issues is the potential for delays in project timelines. The need for thorough reviews and multiple layers of approval can slow down the implementation of necessary changes, leading to frustration among development teams and stakeholders eager to see progress. This can be particularly problematic in fast-paced environments where agility and quick turnaround times are critical.

One of the primary dangers of change approval processes is the introduction of delays, which can significantly reduce organizational agility. The ability to adapt quickly is crucial in a rapidly changing business environment. Rigorous and lengthy approval processes can hinder this flexibility, causing bottlenecks and slowing down the deployment of necessary changes. In "The Phoenix Project" (2013), Gene Kim, Kevin Behr, and George Spafford illustrate how cumbersome change approval processes can stifle innovation and responsiveness. The book highlights real-world scenarios where approval bottlenecks lead to missed opportunities and competitive disadvantages.

Additionally, the complexity and bureaucracy associated with change approval processes can increase administrative overhead. Teams may spend considerable time preparing documentation, attending meetings, and navigating the approval hierarchy, which can divert resources away from actual development and innovation activities.

When formal change approval processes are too stringent or slow, teams may circumvent these procedures to meet deadlines or achieve their goals. This practice, known as shadow IT, involves using unauthorized tools or systems, which can introduce significant security vulnerabilities and compliance risks. For instance, Cisco found that large enterprises typically use over 1,200 cloud services, many of which are not authorized by their IT departments (Dimicco, 2016). This highlights the prevalence of shadow IT driven by the need to bypass slow and restrictive change approval processes. This widespread use of unauthorized technology can lead to data breaches, loss of control over IT assets, and increased operational risks.

Overly bureaucratic change approval processes can stifle creativity and innovation within teams. When employees feel that their ideas and initiatives are constantly subjected to extensive scrutiny and delays, it can dampen their enthusiasm and willingness to propose new solutions. This environment can lead to decreased morale and a culture of complacency. According to an article from Harvard Business Review, excessive controls and rigid processes can demotivate employees, leading to a decline in innovative thinking. The paper suggests that organizations with more flexible and streamlined approval processes foster a more creative and motivated workforce (Anthony et al., 2019).

Change approval processes are intended to mitigate risks, but they can sometimes lead to inaccurate risk assessments. When approval boards lack a deep understanding of the specific changes or the current technological landscape, they may overestimate or underestimate the associated risks. This misalignment can result in unnecessary delays for low-risk changes or insufficient scrutiny for high-risk ones (Anthony et al., 2019).

While change approval processes are designed to safeguard stability and security, they can also introduce significant challenges, including delays, shadow IT, reduced innovation, and inaccurate risk assessments. To mitigate these dangers, organizations should strive to balance control with flexibility, fostering a culture of trust and collaboration. By streamlining approval processes and empowering teams with the autonomy to make informed decisions, organizations can enhance their agility, security, and overall performance.

**References**

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