Alisa Steensen 7/9/25

Module 8.2 DevOps

The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

The change approval process in software development is a formal process used to prevent mistakes by requiring developers to get approval before making changes to an application. When companies require their operations teams to prioritize system stability above all else, change control can easily turn into change prevention. This often frustrates development teams, who are expected to keep delivering updates and new features on a regular basis. In many cases, technology leaders, developers, and even IT operations teams understand that change management has its limits. Approval systems can pose hidden dangers if they are outdated or poorly managed. Below are a few common drawbacks when it comes to delivering software.

Change management can waste time. Every day teams invest their time and effort to design, code, test, and roll out new features which adds extra cost and consumes valuable resources. This can include developer hours and testing time. Not only does this mean lost effort, but it also means the team missed the chance to focus on other improvements that might have brought real value. Manual approval processes, such as using paper forms or email chains, can often cause wasted time. And without modern digital tools, organizations risk losing important information or making costly mistakes. Also, there is the problem of a lack of flexibility. Older systems that lack mobile access can delay decision-making, especially for teams spread across locations and time zones.

Another risk is inflexibility. Older systems that lack mobile or remote access can delay decision-making, especially for teams spread across locations and time zones. Poor coordination in the approval process can block progress and frustrate employees, which ultimately leads to bad productivity.

Organizations that rely on overly strict change approval steps often see their software delivery and daily operations suffer as a result. When every change has to pass through multiple layers of permission in the bureaucracy, it slows the teams down and limits their ability to adapt quickly. In contrast, companies with more flexibility, that streamlined the change processes consistently outperform the rest. They are about twice as likely to hit important goals like higher profits and greater productivity. Rigid approval systems don’t just hold teams back, they can backfire by causing more failed changes. When changes are delayed to squeeze through bureaucracy, mistakes slip through the cracks and poor fixes are released under pressure. As one engineering director from a Fortune 500 firm noted “Change management is a big burden on our digital product owners and developers. No one likes it.” (LaunchDarkly, 2019) This ultimately raises the risk of service interruptions that can frustrate customers and cost more time and money.

In summary, even though change approval processes are meant to protect software systems, they can easily become obstacles when handled poorly. When approvals are slow or outdated, they can waste time and prevent organizations from delivering the updates that users need. As shown, overly strict approval systems can even backfire, which can cause more mistakes. To avoid these pitfalls, companies should be aiming for balanced change management that protects stability without blocking progress. By modernizing workflows, organizations can stay flexible while still managing risk wisely. Ultimately, smart change management should support teams in delivering reliable software, without standing in their way.

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