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Module 8

CSD 380

In previous courses, we have examined the efficiency of a change management process. A change management process is one where major change to an application or environment must be approved by a group of stakeholders. This is to create awareness and accountability for potentially risky activities so that the organization can mitigate those risks to a certain degree. In our textbook, however, Gene Kim makes the case that change control can also introduce risk when not hand

The first way change management can go south is by introducing complexity and friction. Engineers have plenty on their plate without having to navigate an overly complex process. While there are important details that need to be included as well as initial testing that should be completed, the change management body should be trying to make the process as routine as possible. By adding too many questions or prerequisites for putting in a change, we add administrative dread. Engineers need to trust and be comfortable with the process to participate effectively.

The second way change management can introduce problems is by adding time to the change process. One main concept we’ve seen throughout the course of this textbook is the efficiency gained through regular deployment and feedback. If the change management process becomes a regular hindrance to deployment, this can produce a snowball effect that can destroy productivity. Teams are essentially coding “blind” with a deployment sitting in queue that, when released, could create bugs that will need to be corrected and then integrated into the current sprint. Keeping deployments moving and only slowing/stopping the process at necessary times allows the deployment pipeline to operate efficiently.

The third way change management can produce problems is by bringing in unnecessary stakeholders. The textbook quotes Toyota saying that “people closest to a problem typically know the most about it.” In complex software systems, this becomes even more pronounced. After an incident, it may be tempting to invite stakeholders higher up the management chain as well as from adjacent teams. But does this actually bring value? Or is it adding unnecessary time and decision makers into the process? More often than not, widening the change management circle does more harm than good.

Like most things in life, change management must be a balance. Although it is important to have a change process in place, defining the role of a change board is crucial to ensuring its success. On one end of the spectrum, there’s no way to distill a complex into a simple blurb or to ensure that due diligence has been done just because a checklist has been completed. On the other hand, having people removed from the process look through 1000’s of lines of code isn’t likely to change results either. Keeping change management smooth and moving contributes to better overall outcomes.

# Sources

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