The Dangers of Change Approval Process

## Introduction

Change approval processes are integral to organizational management, ensuring that modifications to systems, policies, or products are evaluated before implementation. These processes can also present significant challenges and risks. This paper explores the potential dangers of change approval processes, including how they slow innovation, hamper productivity, and create bottlenecks.

## Impediments to Innovation

One of the primary dangers of rigorous change approval processes is the stifling of innovation. When organizations require extensive approvals for changes, employees may feel discouraged from proposing new ideas. The fear of navigating complex bureaucratic procedures can deter creativity and lead to a culture resistant to change. This risk is particularly acute in fast-paced industries where rapid adaptation is critical for competitive advantage.

## Decreased Agility and Responsiveness

Change approval processes can significantly slow an organization's ability to respond to market demands or emerging threats. Lengthy approval timelines may result in missed opportunities as competitors with more agile processes capitalize on new trends. In environments where speed is essential, such delays can harm market position and profitability.

*Personal Experience*: When I started working in IT 20 years ago, my procedure was to ask my manager if it was okay to make a change. He would weigh in on it and decide if we could proceed immediately or wait until overnight. Work got done quickly. However, after many mergers, a Change Authorization Board (CAB) was introduced, and it now takes months to accomplish what we used to do in days. This shift illustrates how increased bureaucracy can hinder an organization's agility and responsiveness.

## Creation of Bottlenecks

Change approval processes often lead to bottlenecks, where decision-making is concentrated among a few individuals or committees. This can result in delays, as those responsible for approvals may become overwhelmed with requests. Furthermore, bottlenecks can cause employee frustration, decreasing morale and productivity.

## Risk of Inadequate Evaluation

While change approval processes intend to ensure a thorough evaluation, there is a risk that critical aspects of proposed changes may be overlooked. Over-reliance on formal procedures can lead to a checkbox mentality, where the focus is on completing steps rather than genuinely assessing the impact and feasibility of changes. This can result in poorly implemented changes that could have been avoided with a more flexible, nuanced approach.

## Resistance to Change

Complex approval processes can foster a culture of resistance to change. Employees may become accustomed to the status quo, viewing new initiatives as burdensome due to the anticipated red tape. This resistance can hinder organizational growth and adaptability, ultimately affecting long-term success.

## Conclusion

While change approval processes are essential for managing risk and ensuring strategic alignment, they also present significant dangers if not carefully managed. To mitigate these risks, organizations should strive for a balanced approach that allows for flexibility and encourages innovation. Streamlining approval processes, empowering employees, and fostering a culture open to change can help organizations navigate the complexities of change management effectively. Organizations can enhance their ability to innovate and adapt in an ever-evolving business landscape by addressing these challenges.

# References

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