

05/04/25
Ian Lewis
CSD 380

Module 8 Assignment The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

Introduction

Change is a constant in any organization. Whether it's adopting new technology, updating internal procedures, or shifting business strategies, change pervades all aspects of modern life. To manage these changes, companies often use formal approval processes to ensure that decisions are thought through and risks are minimized. While this structure is important, it can also sometimes create its own problems. In this paper, we'll explore some of the common dangers that come with change approval processes and how they can hurt an organization more than help if not managed properly.

Delays and Red Tape

One of the biggest problems with change approval processes is that they can become slow and overly bureaucratic. When too many people are involved in making decisions (or when the process is weighed down with excessive paperwork and steps), changes that should be quick and easy can take weeks or even months to implement. This can make a company less responsive and slow to adapt to new opportunities. In IT departments, for example, delays in change approvals often lead people to make unauthorized changes just to get things done, which can backfire and cause system failures or added costs. By eliminating unnecessary "red tape," organizations can optimize their operations and maintain efficiency.

Rules That Pile Up Over Time

Another issue is something known as "instruction creep." This happens when more and more rules or guidelines are added to the process over time. While each new rule may have a good reason behind it, the result can be an overly complex system that's hard to follow. Employees can get overwhelmed or frustrated, and instead of following the process, they might try to avoid it altogether. Bloated processes should be addressed and reconsidered over time to ensure that team performance is not being hindered by unnecessary oversight, even if the intentions for it are good.

Getting Stuck on Bad Decisions

There's also a psychological trap called "escalation of commitment." This is when leaders stick with a failing idea just because they've already put time or money into it. A rigid change approval system can make it harder to pull back from bad decisions because it adds pressure to keep going, even when it's clear things aren't working. This is another version of a similar concept referred to as "sunk cost fallacy." This psychological phenomenon sees people stick with something because they have already "sunk" time and energy into it, even if it is no longer serving them. Organizations should have internal reviews or bring in outside consultants on a semi-regular basis to assess how current approaches align with strategic goals.

Employee Burnout

When there are constant changes (especially ones that feel forced, unnecessary, or out of touch), employees can experience what's known as change fatigue. This type of burnout happens when people get tired of adapting to new systems, tools, or rules. They can lose motivation, become less productive, or even start looking for jobs elsewhere. This is why it's important to review how current approaches, frameworks, and operations align with strategic goals for the organization. While it's good for teams to remain agile, adaptive, and dynamic, too much change can cause discomfort and a sense of uncertainty in an organization.

Poor Communication and Frustration

If change approvals are handled poorly, they can cause serious communication breakdowns. People may not understand why a change is happening, how it affects them, or who's in charge. This can lead to frustration, especially when changes are delayed or when project costs spiral out of control. Stakeholders might lose confidence in the process, and teamwork can suffer. Streamlining communication and having appropriate checks and balances can mitigate this frustration in organizations of any size or scale.

Conclusion

Change approval processes are meant to protect organizations, but if they're too slow, complicated, or poorly communicated, they can cause more harm than good. Companies need to strike a balance: put enough structure in place to manage risk, but not so much that it gets in the way of progress. Clear communication, streamlined procedures, and an openness to feedback can go a long way in making change smoother and more successful.

References:

ManageEngine. (n.d.). *4 ITIL change management challenges: Unauthorized changes & more*. ManageEngine. <https://www.manageengine.com/products/service-desk/it-change-management/key-challenges-in-change-management.html>

PMI BIS Consultancy. (n.d.). *Mastering change authorization in project management: Best practices, challenges, and case studies*. PMI UK. <https://pmiuk.co.uk/mastering-change-authorization-in-project-management-best-practices-challenges-and-case-studies/>

Smart Approve. (n.d.). *On the impact of project change requests and approval delays*. SmartApprove. <https://www.smartapprove.co.uk/post/smart-approve-on-the-impact-of-project-change-requests-and-approval-delays>

Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Change fatigue*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change_fatigue

Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Escalation of commitment*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escalation_of_commitment

Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Instruction creep*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instruction_creep