The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

Module 8.2 Assignment

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In a fast-paced and constantly evolving business environment, organizations must frequently implement changes to maintain competitiveness, improve efficiency, and meet regulatory standards. The process of approving these changes, however, can introduce significant risks that may affect the organization's ability to remain agile and responsive. While change approval processes are designed to ensure compliance, mitigate risks, and enhance decision-making, they can also create bottlenecks, reduce innovation, and lead to organizational inefficiencies.

One of the main dangers associated with traditional change approval processes is the creation of bottlenecks that slow down the implementation of necessary changes. A common feature in many organizations is the Change Advisory Board (CAB), a group of stakeholders who must review and approve any proposed changes before they are implemented. While this process is intended to ensure that changes are thoroughly evaluated for potential risks, it can become a source of delays. As noted by DevOps Research and Assessment (DORA), traditional approval methods often result in extended delays that can slow down software delivery and prevent the organization from responding swiftly to market demands or internal needs (DORA, n.d.). The reliance on a small group of individuals to make decisions about every change introduces significant friction into the workflow. When key decision-makers are unavailable or are busy with requests, even minor changes can be delayed for extended periods, causing a negative effect on productivity and innovation.

Another significant danger of traditional change approval processes is the stifling of innovation. In highly regulated industries, where compliance requirements are strict, organizations often feel compelled to over-scrutinize changes to minimize risk. While mitigating risks is important, it can lead to a risk-averse culture where employees are hesitant to propose or implement new ideas. Another example of this is the failure to implement new technologies or practices that could improve operations, simply because the approval process is too slow or complex. This is especially problematic in industries like IT and software development, where technological advancements happen rapidly. DORA emphasizes that peer reviews, facilitated by automation tools, are a better approach to change approval, as they allow for quicker detection of issues and reduce the friction caused by traditional CAB approvals (DORA, n.d.). By focusing too much on approval processes and compliance, organizations risk missing out on the opportunities that come with change and innovation. Furthermore, employees who feel their ideas will be repeatedly scrutinized or rejected may become disengaged or demotivated, contributing to a decline in overall organizational creativity and performance.

The process of change approval, especially in hierarchical organizations, can also impact employee morale and organizational culture. When employees perceive that their proposed changes must undergo a lengthy approval process, it can lead to frustration and disengagement. This situation is particularly harmful when employees are actively seeking to improve processes, systems, or customer experiences. Sherzod Odiolov highlights in his Forbes article that over-complicated change management processes can lead to frustration among employees and result in resistance to future change efforts. This is especially problematic in organizations where employees are required to submit change requests that must go through multiple levels of approval. As approval steps increase, the perceived value of change diminishes, and employees may begin to resist proposed changes altogether.

Although the dangers of slow and complex change approval processes are significant, organizations must still account for regulatory compliance and risk management. In industries such as healthcare, finance, and IT, failure to properly vet and approve changes can lead to compliance violations, security breaches, or other adverse consequences. However, there are more efficient ways to manage change requests without compromising compliance. By implementing modern automated tools and peer review systems, organizations can maintain oversight while accelerating the approval process.

Automation tools can streamline the approval process by providing faster assessments and immediate identification of potential issues. This allows organizations to maintain compliance and risk management protocols while also enabling a more agile approach to change. Automation reduces the reliance on manual approvals and ensures that changes are handled quickly without sacrificing the quality of the review process.

The dangers of traditional change approval processes are evident. These processes can create bottlenecks, stifle innovation, negatively impact employee morale, and disrupt organizational culture. While it is essential for organizations to maintain compliance and manage risk effectively, a more agile approach to change approval is necessary to avoid the pitfalls of slow and cumbersome procedures. Implementing peer reviews, automation, and more inclusive decision-making processes can help organizations foster a culture of innovation, speed, and adaptability, allowing them to respond quickly to change while still ensuring that risks are managed appropriately

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