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Module 8.2 Assignment: **The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

Change approval processes are designed to prevent bad updates from reaching production systems, but when they are too strict or slow, they can actually cause more harm than good. Many organizations still use Change Advisory Boards (CABs) or similar approval systems with the belief that requiring multiple levels of review makes software safer. However, studies from the DevOps community show that these heavy approval processes often slow down work, increase delays, and even make systems less reliable. In practice, waiting for approval from people who are not directly involved in the change creates bottlenecks and longer wait times, which leads to bigger, riskier updates being deployed at once instead of smaller, safer changes (DORA, 2019; LaunchDarkly, n.d.; Atlassian, n.d.).

The main problem with slow approval processes is that they reduce the speed of feedback. If a team has to wait days or even weeks for a board to review their changes, they lose the chance to learn quickly from mistakes. According to Octopus Deploy (2020), CABs often don't have enough context to judge technical details, so their reviews don't actually improve quality. Instead, the delay makes it harder to fix issues quickly when something goes wrong. This shows that the extra step not only slows progress but can also increase the risk of larger failures.

Even though strict approvals can create problems, there are times when they are necessary. Highly regulated industries like banking or healthcare may need extra oversight to satisfy legal or compliance requirements (Harness, 2025). In these situations, approval processes need to be smarter, not just stricter. Many experts suggest applying approvals only to high-risk changes while letting low-risk, routine updates move through automated systems. Atlassian (n.d.) explains that "standard changes" are low-risk and repeatable, and can often be pre-approved so that teams don't have to wait for permission every time.

Organizations can use modern practices such as automated testing, peer reviews, and feature flags to balance safety with speed. These tools allow teams to release changes in smaller pieces and quickly roll them back if something goes wrong. Companies can deliver updates faster and more reliably by relying more on automation and peer collaboration instead of slow approval boards. The key is not to remove governance altogether, but to focus approvals where they are most needed and use data to measure whether the process is helping or hurting performance (DORA, 2019).

In conclusion, while change approval processes are meant to prevent failure, they can actually increase risk when applied too broadly. Slow reviews, lack of context, and unnecessary delays lead to larger failures and slower recovery times. A better approach is to apply approvals based on risk, use automation wherever possible, and empower teams to take responsibility for safe delivery. By doing this, organizations can achieve both speed and stability rather than sacrificing one for the other.

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