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CSD 380 Module 8

Assignment 8.2

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The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

Change approval processes are implemented in organizations to ensure that any modifications to systems or procedures are thoroughly evaluated before implementation. While these processes are essential for maintaining stability and security, they can introduce significant challenges and risks if not managed effectively. This essay explores the potential dangers associated with change approval processes, supported by insights from various sources, and provides recommendations for mitigating these risks.

One of the primary dangers of change approval processes is the potential for inflexibility and delays. Rigid approval mechanisms can slow down the deployment of necessary updates and innovations, leading to frustration among developers and stakeholders. According to a study by Forsgren et al. (2018), organizations with stringent change approval processes often experience longer lead times for changes, which can hinder their ability to respond to market demands and emerging threats promptly. In rapidly evolving industries, agility is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge, and prolonged approval times can significantly impede this.

Change approval processes can also introduce significant bureaucratic overhead, consuming valuable time and resources. Research by Drury-Grogan and Russ (2013) indicates that excessive documentation and multiple layers of approval can bog down the process, leading to inefficiencies and increased operational costs. This overhead can demotivate employees and create a culture of risk aversion, where teams are hesitant to propose changes due to the cumbersome approval procedures. Consequently, innovation is stifled, and organizations may struggle to keep pace with technological advancements.

Another critical danger is the risk of incomplete or superficial reviews. In some cases, the sheer volume of changes requiring approval can overwhelm the review team, leading to rushed or inadequate assessments. A report by Gartner (2020) highlights that overburdened change advisory boards (CABs) may not thoroughly evaluate the potential impacts of proposed changes, increasing the likelihood of introducing errors or vulnerabilities into the system. This incomplete review process can undermine the very purpose of the change approval mechanism, which is to enhance stability and security.

Change approval processes can foster resistance to change within an organization. When employees perceive the process as a barrier rather than a facilitator of improvement, they may become resistant to proposing necessary updates or innovations. This resistance can be particularly pronounced in organizations with a history of punitive responses to failed changes. Kotter (1996) emphasizes that a culture resistant to change can significantly impede organizational growth and adaptability, leading to stagnation and reduced competitiveness.

In the context of DevOps and continuous delivery, traditional change approval processes can be particularly problematic. The DevOps Research and Assessment (DORA) report by Forsgren et al. (2019) suggests that high-performing organizations favor lightweight change approval processes, such as peer reviews and automated testing, over formal CAB approvals. These streamlined approaches enable faster, more reliable deployments while maintaining quality and security. Conversely, organizations that rely heavily on formal change approvals often struggle to achieve the rapid iteration and deployment cycles that are hallmarks of successful DevOps practices.

While change approval processes are essential for maintaining control and oversight in an organization, they can also introduce significant risks and challenges if not managed effectively. Inflexibility, bureaucratic overhead, incomplete reviews, resistance to change, and negative impacts on continuous delivery are some of the key dangers associated with these processes. To mitigate these risks, organizations should consider adopting more agile and streamlined change approval mechanisms that balance the need for oversight with the demands for speed and innovation. By doing so, they can enhance their responsiveness, reduce operational inefficiencies, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

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