The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

In today's fast-paced technological landscape, change approval processes in IT Service Management (ITSM) are designed to ensure stability, security, and compliance. However, these processes can inadvertently introduce several dangers that can hinder organizational efficiency and innovation. This paper explores the primary dangers associated with change approval processes, supported by insights from external sources and literature, including *The DevOps Handbook* by Gene Kim et al.

Bureaucratic Delays

One of the most significant dangers of change approval processes is the bureaucratic delays they introduce. According to TeamDynamix, implementing a new ITSM tool can often become bogged down by overly complex approval processes, which delay critical updates and improvements. These delays can frustrate development teams, reduce overall productivity, and slow the time-to-market for new features and products.

Stifling Innovation

Change approval processes, when overly rigid, can stifle innovation within an organization. Myndbend highlights that a highly restrictive change request approval process can discourage creative solutions and agile responses to emerging issues. This rigidity can lead to a culture where employees hesitate to propose new ideas or improvements, fearing lengthy and cumbersome approval procedures.

Increased Risk of Shadow IT

The DZone article "Change Management is Broken: Here’s How to Fix It" discusses how cumbersome change approval processes can lead to the rise of shadow IT, systems and solutions built and used inside organizations without explicit organizational approval. When official channels are too slow or obstructive, employees may bypass them altogether, creating security vulnerabilities and integration issues that the IT department is unaware of.

Reduced Responsiveness

The DevOps Handbook emphasizes the importance of responsiveness in modern IT operations. Long approval cycles can severely impact an organization's ability to respond swiftly to incidents and changes. This lack of agility can result in prolonged downtime, lost revenue, and damage to the company's reputation. Agile and DevOps practices advocate for a more streamlined and automated approach to change management, reducing the reliance on manual approvals.

Overhead Costs

The overhead costs associated with managing change approval processes can be substantial. These costs are not only financial but also involve allocating human resources. Time spent in meetings, filling out paperwork, and waiting for approvals is not spent on productive tasks. According to TeamDynamix, these inefficiencies can accumulate, leading to significant financial burdens on the organization.

Mitigating the Dangers

Organizations need to adopt more flexible and responsive change management practices to mitigate these dangers. The DevOps Handbook suggests integrating change management into the daily workflow of development and operations teams. By using automated testing, continuous integration, and deployment pipelines, organizations can reduce the need for manual approvals and ensure that changes are safe and compliant before they reach production.

Moreover, fostering a culture of trust and collaboration between development, operations, and management can lead to more efficient and effective change management. Encouraging open communication and feedback loops helps identify and resolve issues more quickly, reducing the dependency on formal approval processes.

While change approval processes are essential for maintaining stability and compliance, their implementation can pose significant dangers if not managed effectively. Potential pitfalls include bureaucratic delays, stifled innovation, increased shadow IT, reduced responsiveness, and overhead costs. Organizations can mitigate these risks by adopting more agile and DevOps-oriented approaches and creating a more dynamic and responsive IT environment.

Works Cited

Kim, Gene, et al. *The DevOps Handbook: How to Create World-Class Agility, Reliability, & Security in Technology Organizations*. IT Revolution, 2021

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