**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

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DevOps has become an integral part of software development, and overtime has taken on aspects of previous methods to achieve the overall goal of being agile, efficient, and increase the speed of quality output from a team using automation and cross-functional communication. The risk that is presented with rigid version of change-approval processes can conflict with these overarching goals, and slow down productivity, output speed, and hinger communication. There are many ways that not having agile methods can pose a risk to the DevOps processes.

Traditionally, an infrastructure library would be created to help guide the different steps before a project’s deployment. This process focused a lot on the quality of output, and making sure a project is 100% before moving on to a different aspect of the project. Within this process, changes would have to be submitted through a change request, assessed by the level of impact it may have on the project’s timeline or cost, and receive a formal approval or rejections before implementing the changes on a project. With DevOps having a goal of rapid development, this can cause delays and tension between groups working on a project.

Strict change approval processes can delay the goal of DevOps and reduced the rapid development changes. Needing manual reviews to be approved, between writing up an explanation and presenting the ideas in meetings will extend the overall time spent needing to work on the project, which can add up time, money and resources spent on the project. Forrester Research (2017) found that complex approval processes can increase delivery times around 30% versus those without.

Bottlenecks are common with slower/traditional approval methods, as a large number of requests and changes will be submitted at a lower level, waiting on approval can back up ideas that may have been able to be streamlined in a more agile environment. Delayed approvals can even cause developers to omit a process entirely to help offset time spent waiting on an approval, cause unsecure deployments, according to BMC Software (2019). Many developers would agree that not having a streamlined approval process is one of the main barriers to having an effective process.

The strict approval methods can also cause teams to be afraid to take risks and diversify their methods, in fear of not being understood and therefore not being approved, or for feat of bottlenecking a project. Allowing and encouraging innovation in a fast-moving industry like technology/development is needed to keep up with other companies, and even the technology itself as it advances. Focusing more on stability and needing to approve changes before implementation can not only slow down deployment, but will cause developers to do things safely and predictable, which can cause a project to become stale.

Another common issue is the size of the organization playing a factor in the strict approval processes. The more layers a developer needs to go through can cause not only longer delays, but also increase the risk for errors and inconsistencies. It causes unnecessary risk within the development process, and doesn’t allow for a quick turnaround when a change has to go through many levels of approvals.

Managing and mitigating these issues is essential for a proper development process to be successful. There are many ways to do this, starting with implementing a level of trust, respect and empowerment within the development environment. Allowing developers the opportunity to automate and streamline their approvals with not only improve and quicken the process, but will also give the developers a sense of ownership over their responsibilities on a project. Automating the approval process for small and routine changes will reduce the need for any manual intervention, while also quickening the process and allowing developers to focus on more impactful aspects of a project.

While change approval is also a necessary step to ensure a secure, quality project is ready to deploy, doing so in the most efficient way through a DevOps model, allowing teams to manage locally within their group, automating small/routine changes, and being flexible to change and diversity will help a project not only be completed quicker, but also more efficiently, more cost effective, trust building, and allow updates and changes to be streamlined for any future work that may need to be done.

Sources:

[Avoid approvals for "Standard Changes" - Discussion - BMC Community](https://community.bmc.com/s/question/0D53n00007aEX35CAG/avoid-approvals-for-standard-changes)

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[DORA | Capabilities: Streamlining Change Approval](https://dora.dev/capabilities/streamlining-change-approval/)