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Assignment 8.2

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Change approval is a component of the change control process. Its purpose is to reduce risk and ensure positive outcomes. However, if practiced poorly it can become a barrier instead of a benefit. Poorly designed approval systems can slow workflows, delay essential updates, and hinder innovation. In today’s fast-paced software development environment, organizations need approval processes that support agility and responsiveness, not ones that obstruct progress.

Change control is a structured process used by organizations to manage and implement changes to systems, processes, or products in a controlled manner. Its purpose is to ensure that changes are carefully planned and documented to minimize risk and ensure successful outcomes. A typical change control process consists of several key steps: identifying the need for change, submitting a change request, evaluating the request, approving or rejecting the change, implementing the change, and reviewing its results. Each step is designed to maintain stability while allowing necessary improvements to move forward.

Change approval is one of the most critical phases in this process. After a change request is submitted, it undergoes evaluation to determine its potential impact. The approval step involves stakeholders often a change advisory board to decide whether the change should proceed. The stakeholders rely on risk assessments, testing results, implementation plans, and rollback strategies to make informed choices. Change approval acts as a safeguard, ensuring that only low risk, well planned changes are implemented. However, if the approval process becomes overly complex or slow, it can delay important updates and stifle innovation. In fast-paced industries like software development, organizations must balance the need for control with the need for speed. An efficient change approval process supports this balance by promoting accountability and quality assurance without becoming a bottleneck.

One of the major dangers of a poor change approval process is time wastage. This can happen if you use an inefficient approval process. Approval chains can be slow, and if you are not using purpose-built technology and are relying on email or paper documentation, urgent requests can simply be waiting in an inbox. Approval delays can have serious consequences. Delayed updates have the potential to create system outages. It is not a good idea to ignore known security vulnerabilities. Delays to innovation can reduce competitiveness in the market. It can also be a strain on company culture as developers are forced to wait to implement changes that seem to be an obvious necessity.

A lack of flexibility is another drawback to the change approval process. A one size fits all approach does not account for varying levels of risk. A small patch should not warrant the same scrutiny as a feature update. Not only can this lead to delays for minor changes, but it creates unnecessary overhead. This overhead can keep change approval teams buried in requests and divert their attention from the change requests that truly require their attention. The extra overhead can also increase the cost for any change and result in some minor changes that may have been feasible to no longer be as the cost was artificially driven up. Minor changes over time can become significant, and this overtime can affect the overall product.

There is a risk of documentation getting lost or containing errors if it has to be passed from party to party. This can result in a lack of relevant information. This can result in decision makers having to make poorly informed decisions. Bad decisions can have many different negative outcomes such as financial loss or missed opportunities. It can even be potentially fatal for a business if too many mistakes were made or a single important decision was large enough.

A better approach to managing change in software development is to utilize Agile methodologies combined with automated approval processes. Agile development encourages iterative progress through smaller, incremental updates rather than large, infrequent releases. This approach reduces the risk associated with changes, as each update is smaller in scope and easier to test, monitor, and, if necessary, roll back. Smaller, more frequent changes also promote faster feedback from users, allowing development teams to make improvements in real time based on actual user needs and experiences. This continuous feedback loop enhances product quality and customer satisfaction. In addition, automating the change approval process can significantly improve operational efficiency. By leveraging automation tools, organizations can streamline workflows, eliminate unnecessary bottlenecks, and reduce human error. Automated systems can perform risk assessments based on predefined rules, historical data, and system dependencies to determine whether a change can proceed without manual intervention. This ensures that low-risk, routine changes move forward quickly while high-risk changes are flagged for additional review. Furthermore, automation ensures that approvals are applied consistently and are well-documented for compliance and audit purposes. However, it is important to recognize that even with automation and Agile practices, proper coordination remains essential. Updates must be carefully scheduled and communicated across teams to avoid code conflicts, integration issues, or unplanned downtime. By combining the responsiveness of Agile with the precision and efficiency of automation, organizations can achieve a balanced, modern approach to change management that supports both innovation and stability.

While change approval is a vital part of the change control process, its effectiveness depends heavily on how it is designed and implemented. A rigid, outdated approval system can undermine the very goals it aims to support by introducing unnecessary delays, increasing costs, and hindering innovation. In contrast, modern organizations must prioritize flexibility, efficiency, and responsiveness. By adopting Agile methodologies and automating low-risk approvals, companies can maintain control without creating barriers to progress. Automation, when paired with clear coordination and risk-based strategies, reduces human error and accelerates decision-making. Ultimately, an optimized change approval process empowers teams to move quickly and confidently, making improvements that drive business value while minimizing risk. Embracing this balanced, modern approach enables organizations to stay competitive, responsive, and resilient in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

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