



MODULE 8: HYPOTHESIS-DRIVEN

Module 8.2 Assignment: The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

ABSTRACT

Change approval processes are critical in managing modifications within software development and IT operations. However, they can also introduce significant risks and inefficiencies. This paper examines the risks associated with these processes, drawing insights from diverse sources to offer a comprehensive understanding of the implications of rigid change approval mechanisms.

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Change approval processes are designed to ensure that modifications to systems, applications, or infrastructure are made in a controlled and predictable manner. While the intention behind these processes is to mitigate risks and maintain system integrity, they can inadvertently lead to several dangers that organizations must navigate carefully.

Bureaucratic Delays: A Double-Edged Sword

Change approval processes can be a double-edged sword, with one of the sharpest dangers being bureaucratic delays. Picture this: when necessary, updates require multiple layers of approval, and the speed at which an organization can respond to market shifts or address security threats plummets. These delays not only slow progress but also foster a culture of fear and stagnation. As highlighted in "The Phoenix Project", teams may become hesitant to suggest improvements, fearing the drawn-out approval process will trap them in a cycle of inaction. In today's fast-paced world, this can be a recipe for disaster for an organization that can't adapt, risks being left behind. (Kim, Behr, & Spafford, The Phoenix Project, 5th Anniversary Edition : a Novel about IT, DevOps, and Helping Your Business Win, 2018).

Stifling Innovation

Rigid change approval processes can truly stifle Innovation within an organization. When teams are forced to seek approval for every minor tweak, they often become hesitant to experiment or propose bold new ideas. This challenge is highlighted in "Accelerate: The Science of Lean Software and DevOps," which underscores the importance of fostering a culture that champions experimentation and continuous learning. (Forsgren, Humble, & Kim, 2018).

Organizations that embrace speed and flexibility consistently outshine their competitors. However, cumbersome approval processes act as a significant roadblock to achieving that vital agility. To truly thrive, it's essential to encourage a mindset where Innovation can flourish without unnecessary constraints (Kim, Debois, Willis, Humble, & Allspaw, 2021)

Increased Risk of Errors

It's a bit ironic that change approval processes are designed to minimize risk, yet they can sometimes end up creating more problems. When approvals take too long, teams often find themselves racing to implement changes, which can lead to careless mistakes. Additionally, the more layers there are in the approval workflow, the greater the chance that vital information will get lost in the shuffle or miscommunicated altogether. In "The DevOps Handbook," the authors make a compelling case for a streamlined approach to change management. They argue that simplifying this process isn't just efficient; it can lead to fewer errors and ultimately create a more resilient system. Embracing this philosophy could be the key to smoother transitions and better outcomes (Kim, Debois, Willis, Humble, & Allspaw, 2021)

Resistance to Change

When it comes to altering approval processes, resistance can often emerge among team members. People naturally want to feel valued, and if they sense that their expertise isn't recognized or that their opinions are overlooked in decision-making, they can become disengaged. This growing resistance can lead to pushback against significant changes, ultimately

stalling progress. John Kotter's "Leading Change" emphasizes that for any transformation to succeed, it's crucial to garner buy-in from all stakeholders. Unfortunately, if approval processes remain overly rigid, it can alienate team members and obstruct the necessary momentum for change. (Kotter, 1995).

The Risk of Misalignment with Business Goals

One of the significant pitfalls of change approval processes is their potential to stray from the organization's broader business goals. When the focus is heavily on technical details, it can easily overshadow the strategic objectives that drive the company forward. This disconnect may result in changes that don't contribute to the overarching mission, leading to wasted resources and missed opportunities.

To avoid this trap, change approval processes must be seamlessly aligned with strategic goals. As Eric Ries highlights in "The Lean Startup," embracing customer feedback and iterative development plays a crucial role in ensuring that every change supports the organization's vision. Keeping these principles in mind will help organizations innovate effectively while staying true to their mission. (Eric, 2011).

In conclusion, while change approval processes are essential for maintaining control and reducing risks in IT operations, they can also introduce significant dangers. Bureaucratic delays, stifled innovation, increased risk of errors, resistance to change, and misalignment with business goals are all potential pitfalls that organizations must be aware of. To mitigate these risks, organizations should strive for a balance between necessary oversight and the ability required to thrive in today's fast-paced environment. Embracing a culture of collaboration, continuous improvement, and open communication can help organizations navigate the complexities of change management effectively.

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