Emmanuel Diaz
CSD380 Mod 8.2 Assignment
Prof. Adam Bailey

The Dangers of Change Approval Processes

Change approval processes are fundamental to ensuring that organizational transitions are deliberate, efficient, and aligned with broader strategic goals. However, these processes often introduce significant risks and inefficiencies when poorly designed or implemented. There are some dangers of change approval processes that focus on inefficiencies, resistance, and the unintended risks they can introduce, while offering recommendations to mitigate these issues.

Inefficiencies and Delays

One of the most prominent dangers of change approval processes is inefficiency. Bureaucratic hurdles can cause extensive delays, undermining an organization's ability to respond to rapidly changing circumstances. According to the Harvard Professional Development blog, rigid or overly complex approval workflows stall decision-making, delaying critical initiatives and frustrating employees. These delays are particularly detrimental in competitive markets where organizations need to act quickly to seize opportunities or mitigate emerging risks.

It's also worth pointing out that inefficiencies in the approval process can have a ripple effect, slowing down entire projects and causing teams to lose momentum. Employees may perceive the process as a roadblock rather than a safeguard, which diminishes morale and trust in leadership. In worst-case scenarios, unnecessary delays can lead to missed market opportunities or diminished customer satisfaction, as products or services are launched too late to meet demand effectively.

Resistance to Change

Change approval processes can also foster resistance among stakeholders if they are not carefully managed. Prosci notes that inadequate leadership involvement and insufficient communication are key factors driving resistance to change. When stakeholders do not fully understand the purpose of the proposed changes or feel excluded from the decision-making process, they are less likely to support the initiatives. As a personal note, I've worked in projects in the Cable/Internet industry where this is a common problem as higher ops are usually more concerned about stakeholders than the potential benefits of the project.

Transparency is key, and when not present the resistance usually is even stronger. Employees may view the change as arbitrary or unnecessary if leadership fails to articulate the benefits clearly. The Harvard blog emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement in mitigating resistance. Without this engagement, organizations risk

implementing changes that are met with apathy or outright opposition, undermining the process and jeopardizing its success.

Mismanagement of Risks

Another critical danger lies in the inadequate management of risks during the change approval process. As Sigma-HSE highlights, failing to conduct thorough risk assessments can have dire consequences, particularly in high-stakes industries. For example, procedural changes in manufacturing or chemical processing must comply with stringent safety standards. If these changes are approved without proper evaluation, they can lead to accidents, non-compliance with regulations, or environmental damage.

The same principles apply to other sectors, including technology and finance. Overlooking risks such as cybersecurity vulnerabilities or financial irregularities during the approval phase can expose organizations to operational disruptions, legal penalties, and reputational damage. Effective risk management must therefore be an integral part of the change approval process, ensuring that all potential consequences are identified and addressed before implementation.

Lack of Flexibility

Overly rigid change approval processes can stifle innovation and adaptability. Organizations that rely on hierarchical, top-down decision making often struggle to implement incremental or experimental changes. This rigidity discourages creative problem solving and may lead to stagnation, as employees feel constrained by a system that prioritizes control over agility.

The Harvard blog emphasizes that flexibility in approval mechanisms is crucial for maintaining organizational responsiveness. Agile approaches that empower teams to propose and implement changes within a streamlined framework can help organizations adapt to evolving circumstances without sacrificing oversight or accountability.

Recommendations for Mitigating Risks

- **Streamline Approval Workflows**
  Simplify the approval process to minimize delays and reduce bottlenecks. Automated systems and clear decision-making criteria can help ensure that approvals are granted promptly without compromising due diligence.

- **Enhance Stakeholder Engagement**
  Engage stakeholders early and often to build support for proposed changes. Transparent communication about the goals, benefits, and potential challenges of

Emmanuel Diaz
CSD380 Mod 8.2 Assignment
Prof. Adam Bailey

a change initiative fosters trust and reduces resistance. Leadership involvement is particularly important, as it demonstrates commitment to the process and reassures employees that their concerns are being addressed.

- **Prioritize Risk Assessments**

    Conduct thorough risk assessments at every stage of the approval process. This includes evaluating the potential operational, safety, and financial implications of proposed changes. Risk assessments should be documented and revisited as new information becomes available.

- **Promote Flexibility**

    Develop flexible approval mechanisms that allow teams to propose and implement changes without excessive bureaucracy. Agile frameworks, for example, enable organizations to adapt quickly while maintaining oversight.

- **Implement Continuous Monitoring**

    Even after changes are approved, ongoing monitoring is essential to identify and address any issues that arise during implementation. Feedback loops can help refine the process and ensure that future changes are handled more effectively.

Change approval processes are intended to safeguard organizations against risks and ensure successful transitions. However, when poorly managed, they can introduce inefficiencies, resistance, and operational hazards. By streamlining workflows, engaging stakeholders, conducting thorough risk assessments, and promoting flexibility, organizations can mitigate these dangers and optimize their change management strategies.

https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/7-reasons-why-change-management-strategies-fail-and-how-to-avoid-them/

https://sigma-hse.com/news-insights/management-of-change-consequences/

https://www.prosci.com/blog/why-change-management-fails