**Assignment 8.2: The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

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**The Dangers of Change Approval Processes**

The change approval process is a method to manage changes to a system that is being developed or updated. While it performs this function with varying degrees of success, some major issues can occur with how the process is implemented or used. This paper looks at some of the dangers of using the process and covers how a CAB, or Change Approval Board, can exasperate those dangers.

In the article “Streamlining Change Approval” by dora.dev, it lists out how to streamline the change approval process. During the discussion, the article discusses common pitfalls in the change approval process. The article lists them as follows:

* Reliance on a centralized Change Approval Board
* Treating all changes equally
* Failing to apply continuous improvement
* Responding to problems by adding more process

The first one, relying on a centralized Change Approval Board, is a big enough danger that articles are written about that subject alone. That danger will be explored more in the following paragraphs. Treating all changes equally is exactly as it sounds. A change with little to no impact on server uptime should be treated differently from one that may cause a major outage if implemented incorrectly. Adopting a new development methodology without implementing the tools and policies needed to support change approval leads to a lack of continuous improvement. Without continuous improvement, the change approval process will be difficult to sustain. However, adding too many processes if something should go wrong hinders the change approval process.

Going back to the first pitfall, reliance on a centralized Change Approval Board, in the article “Do You Really Need That Change Advisory Board?” by Dave Karow states that “… having a CAB or similar ‘external approval’ process performed worse than having no approval process at all.” For our purposes, both articles use Change Approval Board and Change Advisory Board interchangeably, referring to both of them as CAB. He further discusses how a change approval process is needed, but CABs slow things down unnecessarily. Instead of a CAB, having peer reviews combined with a system to reject bad changes is the way to go.

Going even further with problems with a CAB, the article “Change Advisory Boards Don’t Work” by Alex Yates discusses exactly why a CAB hinders the change approval process. They increase lead times by delaying updates and waiting for a meeting to discuss the changes. In addition to increased lead times, the deployment frequency decreases as deployment can only happen after the meeting, with a large batch of changes being approved or denied at the same time. Finally, CABs contribute to worse restore times should a problem occur as the system ends up designed to reduce bad deployments rather than recover from bad deployments.

While there are a few dangers to implementing a change approval process, such as equal treatment of changes, not applying continuous improvement, and mistakenly adding more processes, a CAB should be handled much more carefully. A CAB could be a significant contributor to why a company's change approval process doesn't work. Having a method to track and approve changes to a system is important, and the change approval process poses dangers that should be taken into consideration. The system that is chosen should be carefully considered and should be implemented and supported correctly.

**Sources**

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