



CASE STUDY · PROCUREMENT APPROVAL

Too many approvers.

Too little checking.

How a national energy company moved authority to where the knowledge already sat — and found that fewer approvals meant more control, not less.

SWIPE →

BEFORE



AFTER



on-time approval of purchase requests



THE SITUATION

Where control became a formality

- Approval rights had accumulated over years, granted with system access rather than designed around a decision. Anyone holding the button became part of the route.
- The people who knew the contract, the budget and the technical requirement rarely held the authority. The people holding the authority rarely had the context to question anything.
- So, most approvals were a forwarding action. The transaction moved on, and the verification everyone assumed was happening somewhere had no fixed home.
- The cost of that was invisible. A request could wait days in an inbox without anyone realising a queue had formed — least of all the person it was waiting on.

WHAT AN APPROVAL SHOULD ANSWER

Is this technically the right item · is it commercially covered
· is the budget already agreed · and does the person being asked hold both, the information to judge it and the authority to decide?

5 approvals

between a request and a purchase order

~1 in 3

of elapsed time spent waiting on an approval that changed nothing



THE RESULT

~93%

of purchase requests now
approved on time

BEFORE

~61%

~34 → ~12 days

average time from request to purchase order

AFTER

~93%

5 → 2 approvals

Approval steps before and after — each square is one approval

BEFORE • ~61% ON TIME



AFTER • ~93% ON TIME



a real control & verification



pressing the button



THE APPROACH

Three of the changes that mattered most

01

Authority moved to where the knowledge was

The people who understood the contract, the specification and the budget now hold **the decision**. Approval sits with judgement rather than with system access — and segregation of duties held throughout.

02

Every remaining approval answers a real question

Each step that remained exists because **a control is genuinely required** at that point. Where there was nothing left to decide, the step was removed. Fewer approvals, each of them has got a meaning.

03

Waiting became visible

A request sitting in someone's queue is **no longer invisible** to the person it's sitting with. Delay stopped being something that happened quietly between steps and became something the process makes visible to everyone it touches.



WHAT IT TAUGHT

Control isn't a signature. It's active verification.

Approval had been treated as an act of **permission** — something granted by whoever held the right in the system. But permission and control are not the same thing. Control requires someone who can actually **judge what is in front of them**: who knows the specification, the contract, the budget, and what a good answer looks like.

Where authority sits apart from that knowledge, ***an organisation can have a great many approvals and very little control.*** Bringing the two back together doesn't loosen the grip — it's the only thing that creates one.

IF THIS RESONATED

- A process with plenty of approvals and not enough certainty? Let's talk.
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