



# Going Beyond Lip Service

If you want to make changes that endure, you need to change yourself.

By Jim Clemmer

**N**onprofit executives may realize their organizations need sweeping changes without understanding how much their own behaviors need to change. Talking about customer service, quality, or continuous improvement isn't enough. Leaders need to be highly involved in making these practices a way of life.

Use the following model to plot the gap between words and actions. The first three kinds of behavior will produce some payback to an organization. But you'll see lasting change only when key executives make the long leap to stages 4 and 5:

**1. Permission:** This behavior occurs when the chief executive and other top managers passively allow change programs to proceed without setting direction, standards, priorities, or measurements. Funding is limited since improvement is perceived as "nice to do" but not relevant to pressing problems.

**2. Lip service:** Senior executives push the need for change in speeches, memos, and other communications. Slogans or "vision statements" exhort the organization to use the latest tools. Executives authorize isolated training programs and improvement activities.

Use this model to plot the gap between words and actions.

**3. Passionate lip service:** Executives with great conviction promote the need for change—for everybody else. Top people are rarely exposed to the key training and techniques used in the change program. Some strategies, standards, and measurements are set, but accountability for results is weak.

**4. Involved leadership:** Senior executives have a clear and compelling view of how the change effort fits with their strategic goals, priorities, and operating pressures. They manage key processes horizontally across a team-based organization. Their major goal is to focus continuously on customers and serve them better. Executives personally teach and apply key tools and techniques. Every team's work is linked to the organization's current problems, opportunities, and long-term goals.

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**5. Integration:** At this stage, change efforts are used to meet the organization's must-do objectives. Day-to-day decisions are delegated to teams who are served by a lean management and support structure. Executives are continuously gathering ideas from their people and communicating the organization's direction, strategies, and values. The change program's tools and techniques are routinely used in executives' daily work lives.

Why does such involvement make

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a difference? People in organizations are natural mimics. They act like their leaders despite all attempts to train and develop them otherwise.

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## Working for Change

For more on creating meaningful change, see these *Nonprofit World* articles at [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members):

- **The Promise and Pitfalls of Organizational Change** (Vol. 28, No. 4)
- **Are You Walking Your Walk? Rate Yourself with This Easy-to-Use Grid** (Vol. 29, No. 5)
- **How to Improve the Process of Change: The Sanctuary Model** (Vol. 28, No. 6)
- **When It's Time for a Turnaround** (Vol. 26, No. 2)
- **Taking Action to Manage Change** (Vol. 29, No. 1)