



Maria Walls

Beaufort County Treasurer

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In her eight-plus years as Beaufort County Treasurer, Maria Walls has shattered expectations. An office originally budgeted to strengthen county coffers by \$250,000 a year now measures its success in the millions. Along the way, they've prevented increases in new taxes by 13.1 percent.

If you're a taxpayer in Beaufort County, that's what they've managed to do for you. But looking at what Walls has done from a business standpoint might be even more impressive.

Having turned the office into a well-

oiled machine ready to evolve to meet any challenge, she has turned her focus on her people. Hers is a team run on a philosophy of extreme ownership, empowering each employee as a leader and encouraging 360 degrees of support.

"It takes a team to achieve what we have, and that team needs to be fully bought in to our core values," she said. "I have high standards that won't be compromised. We're here to serve our customers first. If we can do that in an outstanding manner though and be there for each other, why not?"

Just as Walls upended the traditional approach to the

Treasurer's Office, ushering in a rising tide that has elevated Beaufort County operations across the board, she is taking an approach to office culture that goes above and beyond. In the Treasurer's Office, it's not uncommon to find babies sitting in on team meetings. Team members regularly attend financial peace classes led by Walls, helping them handle their personal finances with the same wizardry she applies to the county's. And frequent cross-training ensures that employees can work from home or take time off without compromising the standards and expectations that Walls has set for the office.

"I don't want my team to worry they'll be judged for wanting to join their child for lunch at school... When people feel that what they're passionate about isn't allowed to be a priority, they don't work well," Walls said. "Having four kids myself, I understand. So, what I have created on our team is an environment where you're encouraged and appreciated for having the right priorities."

And while it has created a more fulfilling workplace, it has also helped bolster the office's steady upward trajectory. "We've had outstanding results—the highest collection rate ever every year for four years and millions in investment earnings," Walls said. "At this point, we're only competing with ourselves."