

CkC Custom Homes

Making Your House a Home



*[BY: CORI SMELKER]
[PHOTOGRAPHY: EDUARDO ROMERO]*

Taking risks is something Charles (Chuck) Powell knows a lot about. He started CkC Custom on little more than the money in his savings account and his wife's encouragement and insistence. It's not like he was a complete novice though. Powell was born in to the building and construction industry and his father set him to work digging foundations, laying cement and framing out houses when he was old enough to hold a hammer.

After Powell completed college, he took what he learnt from his father and moved into working for a nationally recognized builder. He worked his way up the corporate ladder from Superintendent to Construction Manager. During that time he moved to Austin and bought his first home. His company then asked him to relocate to San Antonio, which he was glad to do.

During this time of transition, Powell met Kristal, a lovely brunette from the Valley region. She moved to San Antonio and they bought their first home in The Vineyards. "It was strange," confesses Powell, "the other home owners didn't really like us. They thought we were too young and in a way an 'undesirable' element." Residents' opinions would soon change for the better though. In March 2002, after many months of debate, and Kristal's encouragement, Powell decided to risk everything and strike out on his own. "I owned two rent houses, but they were empty at the time. I had \$50K in savings and I cashed in my 401(k). We had enough to live on for a few months while I tried to find a bank to finance me, and pay attorney fees to create my own company." Suddenly Powell turns his intense blue eyes on Kristal, "I don't think I ever told you this, but before we got our first contract we were down to \$100 in the check book."

Powell took a chance and it paid off. "I was fortunate to find a banker who believed in me. I have faced age discrimination almost my entire life. Every banker I talked to would look at my age before looking at my business plan and flat-out turn me down." One bank, The Bank of Texas, was different. Powell saw the bank was constructing a new building and went and talked to the bank manager, Jim Harlan. Immediately Harlan said yes where all the others said no. Since then he has formed such a great relationship with the bank that CkC Custom Homes have their offices on the bank's second floor.

With no prospects in sight though, Powell called a friend, "Hey. Can I build you a house?" I asked him, He said yes! We



haven't looked back since." It was during this time he noticed there were eight empty lots in The Vineyard, all on his street. "We bought all eight lots, and built custom homes. Suddenly our neighbors loved us because we increased their property values with the kind of homes we were putting up."

This germinated an idea in Powell's mind. "Why not build where we live?" Kristal explains. "We want our clients to know that we believe so much in the area they're building in that we live there too; that we're also invested in that community."

So why choose CkC Custom Homes when there are so many builders out there? "Let me tell you why," Powell exclaims, face lighting up, "Because we will build your house on time and on budget. I deal personally with the vendors, the suppliers, and the client." Powell realized that if he paid his contractors more, and supervised the jobs himself, he got better quality work from his sub-contractors. "Staying hands-on with the guys really helps," Powell says.

The Powell's are a true team as Kristal handles the design and aesthetics of the home. Through three rounds of consultations she helps the homeowner select the highest possible product for the best price. "Kristal knows how to find a deal," Powell says of his wife proudly. Kristal juggles this along with their eight-month old daughter, London. "I love what I do," she says modestly, and it is apparent from looking around their house that she has an eye for design.

No two CkC Custom Homes are the same, although some design elements from one home may be carried to another if a



client sees something he or she likes. Powell also stays abreast of trends and ensures his homes are built to the highest standards in the industry. It has paid off as in 2006 and 2007 he won the "Best Custom One-of-a-kind Home" award by GSABA (Greater San Antonio Builder's Association).

There are several things clients appreciate about a home that was built by CkC Custom Homes. First of all the home is built from top materials, and built right the first time. Secondly, the materials used for the home help reduce maintenance costs and thirdly, a CkC Custom Home can appreciate in value by 15% by the time it is completed. "One of my customers built a home and then was transferred. He never even had a chance to move in! But he sold it for 15% more than he paid for it," Powell says.



Powell has met with such great success because he is upfront and honest with his vendors, his contractors and his clients. "I don't hide what I make from a job. I take a percentage, so if the client has to change stream in the middle and downsize, he knows my percentage stays the same, but I will make less on the project."

As the phone rings for the umpteenth time, Powell smiles. "It might be busy, but we wouldn't have it any other way," as he gets up to supervise the construction crew who are working in the front garden. "Things are good," echoes Kristal, "We are blessed. The Lord has looked after us." **N**

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