

Before



Jeff Camp Camdur Building Group

Westside builder develops keen survival skills to keep business afloat during turbulent times.

by Jennifer McDermitt

When Jeff Camp of Camdur Building Group built his own home in the late 1980s, he saw something potential. Not just potential in his new home, but potential in the industry itself. Camp felt that the building industry had potential to fulfill his entrepreneurial dreams and provide a good career.

Today, Camp still sees potential in the industry, even during these challenging times. Although he's faced some difficult times, his business is weathering the storm thanks to his savvy business skills and keen sense of where the industry is headed.

"I try to constantly monitor demand and price points and remain watchful of trends," said Camp. "In addition, I stay involved in the association, because that has been vital to our survival."

Keeping Out of the Sand

After Camdur built that first home, and several others, he decided to make things official and started Camdur Building Group with a business partner, Matt DuCharme. Together, they began building 3-4 homes a year, but in no time, the business grew, and by 2006, the pair was building 40-50 homes a year in the \$100-200,000 range. Unfortunately, things changed dramatically.

"Everything just sort of came to a standstill," said Camp. "Demand dropped, the banks stopped lending money, and we had an inventory of homes we couldn't sell."

According to Camp, instead of just "burying their heads in the sand," they got more involved with the association, diversified and began educating themselves on new trends and building techniques.

"I completed the EarthCraft House certification program where I learned how to build green homes," he said. Camp and his partner also survived by diversifying into remodeling and relying on the success of Alternative Environments Building Group, Inc., a commercial grounds maintenance company that Camp & DuCharme started in 1996.

After earning his EarthCraft certification, Camp had the opportunity to utilize his new skills on a remodel of an existing home. The homeowners not only wanted to build a future in-law suite, but they also desired to have the existing section of the home brought up to EarthCraft standards. Camp added a full kitchen, two baths, two bedrooms and a new roof, as well as other features to make it a true EarthCraft home.

"Our EarthCraft representative was impressed with how we exceeded the standards for certification in the older part of the home; therefore this home was nominated as one of the three finalists for

the EarthCraft Remodeling Project of the Year," said Camp.

The Connections that Matter

Camp and his partner have been members of their local, the Westside HBA, since starting their business, but Camp says he began to get more involved about six years ago, and he is glad he did.

"The association has been very helpful during these tough times," he said. Camp says that after the floods last year, Westside's executive officer, Chris Collier, went to the local county officers to offer help from the local's members. As a result, Camp, and many other members, earned leads for the rebuilding effort as a direct result of their membership. "Chris Collier was viable in his efforts to help his members, and we credit him for many of the builders surviving the tough times," he said.

Camp recently finished a term as the local president and now looks to get more involved with the state association, the Home Builders Association of Georgia, so he can continue to strengthen his business and prepare for the inevitable industry rebound.

"I look forward to when things turn around, especially with how the green movement is progressing," he said. "Builders and consumers should embrace energy efficiency, because it's our future." ☺