

HEART OF THE MATTER

The kitchen has long been regarded as the hub of the home, something Vicky Shudell and Emma Hood know only too well

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Vicky Shudell and Emma Hood pictured at the recent 10th anniversary party



It's a bit of a good cop, bad cop thing...' Now, perhaps Starsky & Hutch come to mind, or even DCI Gene Hunt and DI Sam Tyler, but possibly not the duo who currently oversee the very successful Funktional Kitchens business. But Vicky Shudell, who launched the company with her husband a decade ago, insists that's how things work between her and business partner, Emma Hood.

'I am very business minded,' Vicky continues. 'Because I have been in the business for so long for various companies, any sort of aspect or question to do with kitchens I can answer. I am confident in what we can do – and what we should do. Emma is very organised, whereas I do everything at 100mph. She doesn't make any mistakes. We work very well together, and it gives you peace of mind to be that way.'

The three of us are seated in Funktional Kitchens' Cross Street outlet,



The Shaker-style kitchen is a popular choice



which opened in 2009 and came after a flourishing first four years in Crouch End. As their name suggests, they believe what's most important when it comes to a kitchen is that it's functional. But what of the spelling? 'It is the German way of spelling,' Vicky reveals. 'We saw it in all the catalogues we were reading [at the time of launching]. We just thought it was perfect as it was funky and fun. It was something a little different.'

It was one aspect that initially helped them to stand out from the rather busy kitchen company crowd, but meeting the two you get a real sense of the personable service you'll encounter if making use of their expertise – something that garnered them high praise over the past ten years. Part of their approach is to make sure a particular design will fit in with someone's lifestyle. 'It needs to work and it needs to flow, but it also needs to look good,'

Emma says. 'Everybody wants different things and has different ideas, so it's a matter of working with a client. They may have quirky ideas that could look great, but actually wouldn't be practical or functional. It's about trying to let people have some input and show their artistic flair, without you saying as a designer "this is the only option for you". We have many different brands that we sell, so we are not restricted to one design.'

The two showrooms work in perfect harmony with each other. An example is when you look at what's in with kitchens right now. Traditional cabinetry is currently a major trend within kitchen design, but when the Islington showroom was opened in 2009 it was all about modern cabinetry – the two showrooms

offer both, in a variety of colours of styles. 'People like the idea that they are not locked into one type of cabinetry,' Emma adds. 'We try to develop the company to have a variety of choice.'

A decade down the line, does Vicky still have the same enthusiasm as she did when Funktional Kitchens first launched? 'Every day is different,' she muses. 'Each project is different. One person might not be ready to make decisions for a couple of months, whereas another might be ready to go straight away. So you need to be able to juggle different things within this job.' Good cop, bad cop? It's a double dose of good in our book.

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