

TAKE IT FROM ME OSCAR DE LA HOYA

CHAMPS CAN'T FIGHT FOREVER.

THIS ONE BUILT A BUSINESS EMPIRE TO FALL BACK ON.

HERE'S HOW HE PLANS AHEAD

1 SET YOUR EXIT

De la Hoya will be 35 when he fights Manny Pacquiao on December 6. He knows he's nearly done with his boxing career, but he's ready: In 2001 he started Golden Boy Promotions as a way to build off his successes without being stuck in a position he's outgrown. "I won't have to come back," he says.

2 PLAY THE CROWD

Unlike many boxers, De la Hoya wears a suit and speaks calmly at press events. He's using the spotlight to advance his business interests. "It shows that, hey, I'm not just an athlete," he says. "You can use a platform to do bigger and better things." That's true at any job, and in any meeting: There's always someone higher to impress.

3 KNOW YOUR PLACE

Pursue interests, but don't chase every success. De la Hoya considered a singing career after a song on his debut CD earned a Grammy nomination in 2001. "But I was just another artist trying to sell CDs," he says. "I didn't have control." So he refocused on boxing.

4 TAME YOUR FEARS

Investing in newspapers these days sounds crazy, but De la Hoya has done just that. His targets are thriving Spanish-language papers that cater to an underserved market. "The opportunity is surprising, but tremendous," he says. Especially in down times, you can outsmart competitors with seemingly unattractive deals that are really untapped winners.

5 DROP DEAD WEIGHT

De la Hoya switched trainers to improve his boxing, and he'll drop business partners he thinks are slowing him down. "I tell all my colleagues, 'I'm shooting for the stars. You either want to hang on, or you don't,'" he says. Same goes for your personal trainer and financial advisor: You hire them to help you, so expect great things.

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Patrick Gardino/Corbis-Outline