

# Raley's ratchets up marketing to compete in crowded grocery field

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Even as it has been shutting some stores and trying to get concessions from unionized employees, West Sacramento-based Raley's is trying to reassert its brand in a brutally competitive Northern California supermarket environment.

The privately held company's multiple marketing efforts range from online shopping options to expanded private brands to working closely with local growers ... and even bringing back an instantly recognizable voice from the past.

"We're always looking for ways to improve the Raley's brand, both in our food and service area," said Kevin Konkell, senior vice president of sales and marketing. "Yes, we are doing different things."

Analysts are skeptical that marketing efforts will be enough to solidify Raley's position against the onslaught of competition from nonunion discount grocers such as Wal-Mart. Raley's sales fell 8 percent between 2008 and 2010.

But local shoppers are likely to notice some of the efforts.

One of the most visible is the return of 83-year-old Frank McMinn, the longtime radio voice of Raley's. McMinn's silky-smooth delivery could seemingly prompt the most jaded radio listener to take instant notice of a weekly special on sweet corn.

The folksy McMinn – who joined Raley's as an ad man in the 1950s and was a marketing vice president before retiring in 1993 – was out the door as pitchman in late 2008, when Raley's

opted to try other marketing options.

However, when Michael Teel, grandson of Raley's founder Tom Raley, came back on board as CEO in early 2010, things were re-evaluated.

**Read the whole story**