“We Really Have to Hit Them Where It Hurts”: Analyzing Activists’ Corporate Campaigns

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Abstract

Despite a surge in activism efforts directed at corporations, extant research largely overlooks how activist organizations craft and implement their campaigns. To address this gap, this article examines the process used by activist organizations to pressure target corporations into altering practices and policies that they perceive to be problematic. Using a qualitative approach, this study draws from interviews with 21 activist practitioners, which are supplemented by organizational documents and news articles. Based on the findings, the Activist Corporate Campaign Model is introduced, depicting and describing the various phases of activists’ corporate campaigns, including how these groups determine what threat is most appropriate and select coordinating tactics.

Keywords:   
activist organizations; anti-corporate activism; corporate campaign; issues management; social movements

Author Biography  
Dr. Chelsea Woods is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at Virginia Tech, where she teaches public relations courses. Her research explores the intersection of public relations and organizational communication, focusing on crisis communication, anti-corporate activism, and corporate social responsibility.