

# **Corporate activism in conflict escalation: The strategy of discursive mediation**

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## **Abstract-**

**Side-taking, a much-studied form of corporate sociopolitical activism, can help organizations align with their stakeholders but also fuel polarization, a pressing risk that can destabilize their operating environments. How can organizations thus respond to their stakeholders' pressures to take a position on sociopolitical issues while simultaneously addressing this risk? We conceptualize an alternative strategy, discursive mediation, which differs from side-taking and peace brand activism in terms of how, when, and why it is carried out. We find evidence of this strategy by conducting a historical case study of the conflict over Catalan independence. We show that employer organizations strategically positioned themselves as mediators with explicit calls for negotiation and with discourse that changed the hostile representation of factions and that proposed solutions that could de-escalate the mounting tensions. These strategies set the stage for a rapprochement of the factions while protecting organizational interests.**

**Index Terms- Sociopolitical positioning; Sociopolitical conflicts; Critical discourse analysis; Polarization; Diplomacy; Peacemaking**

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