

MONTHLY FEATURES

[This Month](#)

[Archive](#)

[Next Month New!](#)

MONTHLY CITY GUIDES

[Where To Eat](#)

[Datebook](#)

ANNUAL CITY GUIDES

[Best Of Baltimore](#)

[Best Restaurants](#)

[Cheap Eats](#)

[Top Doctors](#)

[Baltimore Bride](#)

[Metroguide](#)

ABOUT BALTIMORE

[Subscribe Now!](#)

[Subscription Service](#)

[Other City Mags](#)

[Masthead](#)

[Design, Print, Web Services](#)

[Advertising Info.](#)

[Intern Info.](#)

[Writers Guidelines](#)

[Contact Us](#)

SEARCH BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE



edited by
Ken Iglehart



Jefferson Steele

Goetz: A simple approach.

I'll see you in cyberspace

When you think e-commerce, you don't think judges.

But there he is anyway, the Honorable Clarence Goetz, presiding over an online claims-settlement service called ussettle.com.

Goetz, a former Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge, will tell you that in his 26 years on the bench, he learned to "whittle away the unnecessarily complicating aspects of the typical how-much-are-you-willing-to-settle-for mediation" until he's left with a simple, equitable approach. "In other words, you don't tell people what you think they should do," he says. "You let them come to their own conclusions."

The site itself is simple, thanks in no small part to a slick but subdued interface created by Michael Teitelbaum, president of Baltimore-based Digital Source. But behind that unassuming facade are some complex security programs—to ease the worries of lawyers, insurance companies, or business people who might want to use the site. The security features were installed by Tom Loveland's Lutherville-based Mind Over Machines. Both Teitelbaum and Loveland are shareholders in the ussettle.com venture.

The site's settlement strategy is a little like playing that

odds-and-evens game kids do with their fingers: After filling out a short informational form and choosing a password, claimants submit their demand and defendants submit what they're willing to pay. If the offer is at least 70 percent of the demand, the parties are told a settlement has been reached, and the mean of the two numbers is delivered as the arbitrated figure. If the demand and offer are too far apart for settlement, claimant and defendant are so notified, and professionals from U.S. Settlement Corp. will step in to resolve the dispute by traditional means. Users are charged the standard \$250 flat fee only after a resolution is reached.

In the end, Goetz says his web-based formula for settling monetary disagreements is tailor-made for individuals who would rather settle than argue, but who are having difficulty sitting down together.

“This site takes the emotion out of it,” says Goetz, “and the bluffing, the blustering, and the egos.” Which, he hopes, will make it just perfect for lawyers.

• Michael Billings

[Next](#) | [Back](#)

ARTICLES | ARCHIVE | WHERE TO EAT | DATEBOOK | BEST OF BALT. | SUBSCRIBE