



**MICHAEL R. DILIBERTO, ESQ.**



## **Name That Game**

Hard-bargaining tactics come in different flavors. Common tactics include:

- (1) Extreme claims, followed by slow, small concessions;
- (2) Lack of authority issues;
- (3) Take-it-or-leave-it offers;
- (4) Personal insults;
- (5) Threats and warnings; and
- (6) Good cop, bad cop routines.

If the other negotiator tries to inhibit you from playing your game with unexpected comments or challenges, your initial reaction may be to respond in kind to protect yourself. Instead of knee-jerk reactions that can escalate the conflict or lead to impasse, consider the following:

*Interrupt the game* by taking a break or changing the pace of the negotiation. Slow the momentum to give yourself time to think about how you want to respond.

*Name the game*, by calling out the other negotiator's use of unproductive actions or dirty tricks, suggests Professor Robert H. Mnookin (Harvard Law School). Naming the move informs the other side that you know what they are doing, and signals that the tactic or action is not working, or is inappropriate. Let them know that you can play that game too. Most opponents will stop using an ineffective tactic.

*Change the game* by suggesting another process that might work better for both parties. A game change should interest the other side if the new game is likely to produce better results than they will get from playing hardball. But because you named their game, and demonstrated its futility by showing you can play it too, you are positioned to shift the process toward a productive negotiation.