

Paul Farnell

# UNCONVENTIONAL WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR SITE

Presented at Future of Web Design conference  
17 April 2008

Paul Farnell

# WHO IS THIS GUY?

Web design freelancer for 5 years

Founded Litmus with two others in 2005

Currently running design, business and marketing side of Litmus

Compatibility testing service for designers working on email and web site designs

From my experience with Litmus, going to share traffic-building tips which have worked for us

- ★ SEO, blogging, AdWords
- ★ Visitor figures

What's

# CONVENTIONAL?

SEO, blogging, adwords are all good techniques, have worked for us, but have been covered in enormous depth before

Want to highlight unconventional techniques which we've found work very well for building and maintaining quality traffic

FIGURES: Not just about numbers, monthly unique visitors

Linkbait articles to get Digg traffic which never returns

Want quality traffic, and to maintain the flow of visitors

- ★ Satellites
- ★ Content
- ★ Communities
- ★ Human

What's

# UNCONVENTIONAL?

Satellites – which are free, useful tools which attract people to your site

Content – how to build content people truly value

Communities – how to interact with them to benefit your site/company/brand, and how to create your own successful communities

Human underpins everything I'm talking about today. The art of being human, likeable, and thereby building trust with your visitors. You can't be trusted without being human.

- ★ Small
- ★ Free
- ★ Valuable
- ★ Complementary

Build

# SATELLITES

Things your company also offers, alongside your main product

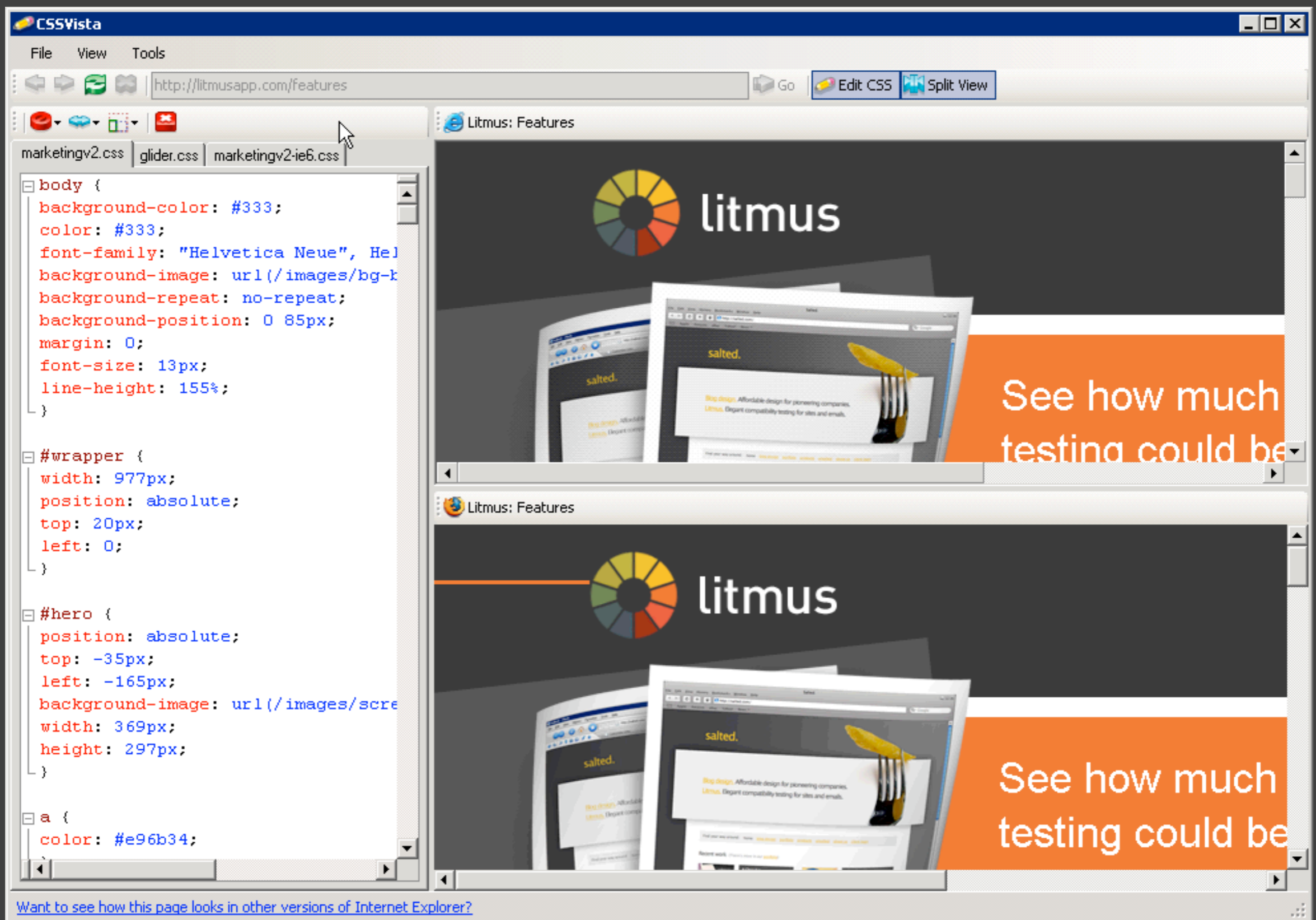
Small – small feature set

Free – because they're small they can be free

Valuable – solve a problem

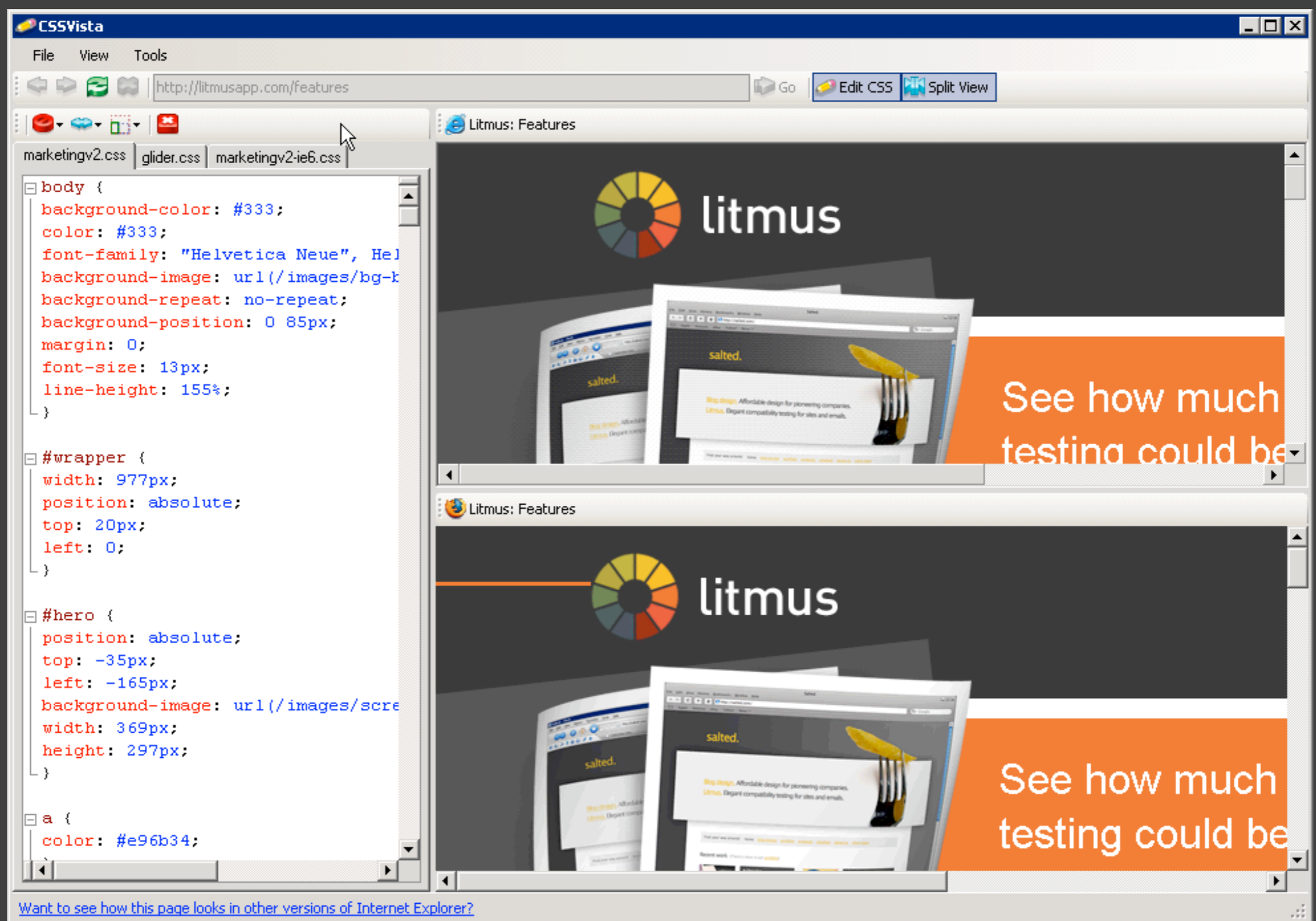
Complement your site, so that user base is your target market

Ultimate aim is to drive qualified visitors to your main site



# CSSVista

Example of a satellite that Litmus offers, alongside our main product



## Small feature set

Lets designers check their page in FF and IE, editing CSS and seeing results simultaneously in both

CSStVista

File View Tools

http://litmusapp.com/features

Go Edit CSS Split View

marketingv2.css glider.css marketingv2-ie6.css

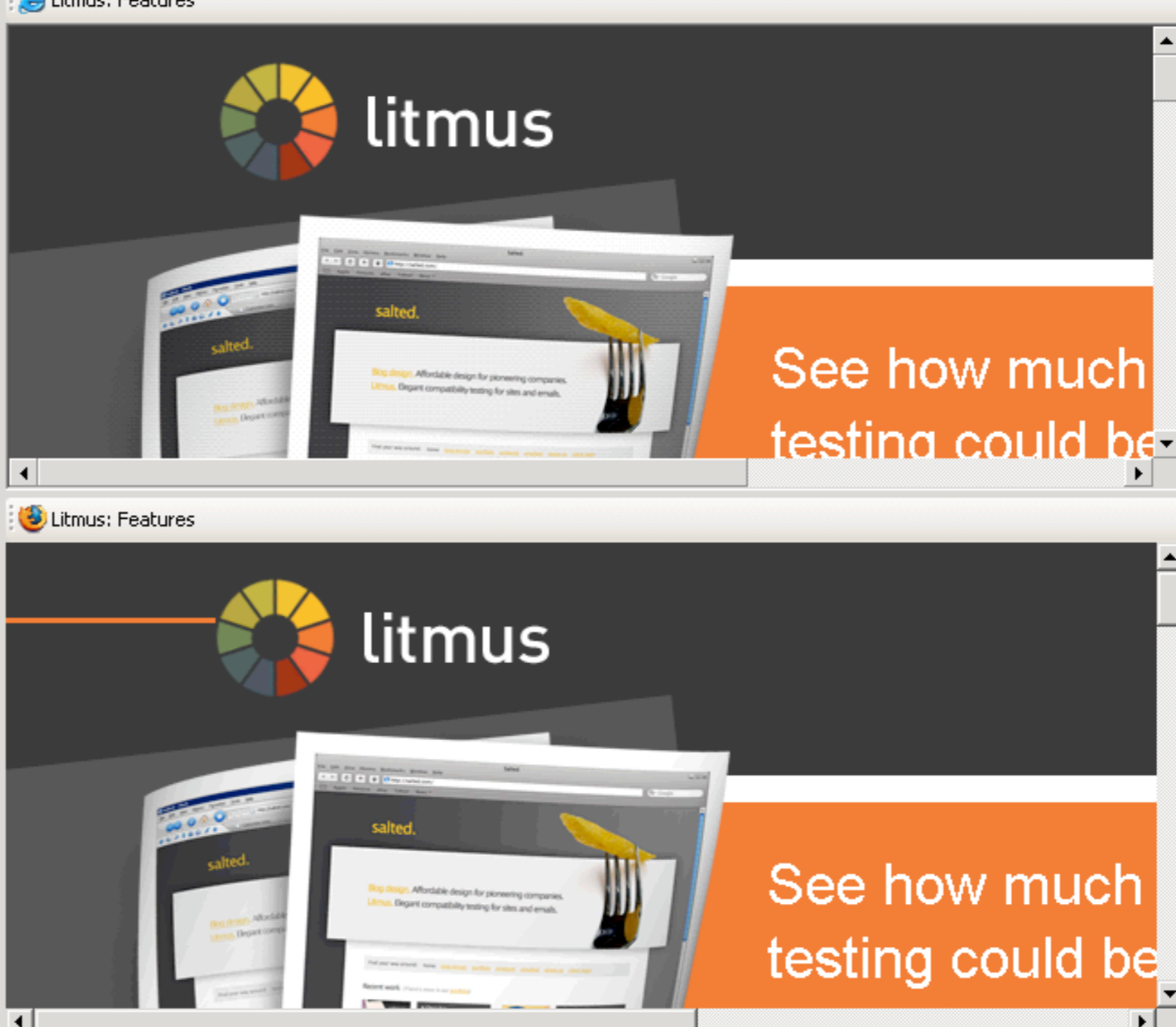
```
body {
background-color: #333;
color: #333;
font-family: "Helvetica Neue", Hel
background-image: url(/images/bg-k
background-repeat: no-repeat;
background-position: 0 85px;
margin: 0;
font-size: 13px;
line-height: 155%;
}

#wrapper {
width: 977px;
position: absolute;
top: 20px;
left: 0;
}

#hero {
position: absolute;
top: -35px;
left: -165px;
background-image: url(/images/scre
width: 369px;
height: 297px;
}


a {
color: #e96b34;
}
```

Litmus: Features



See how much testing could be

Litmus: Features

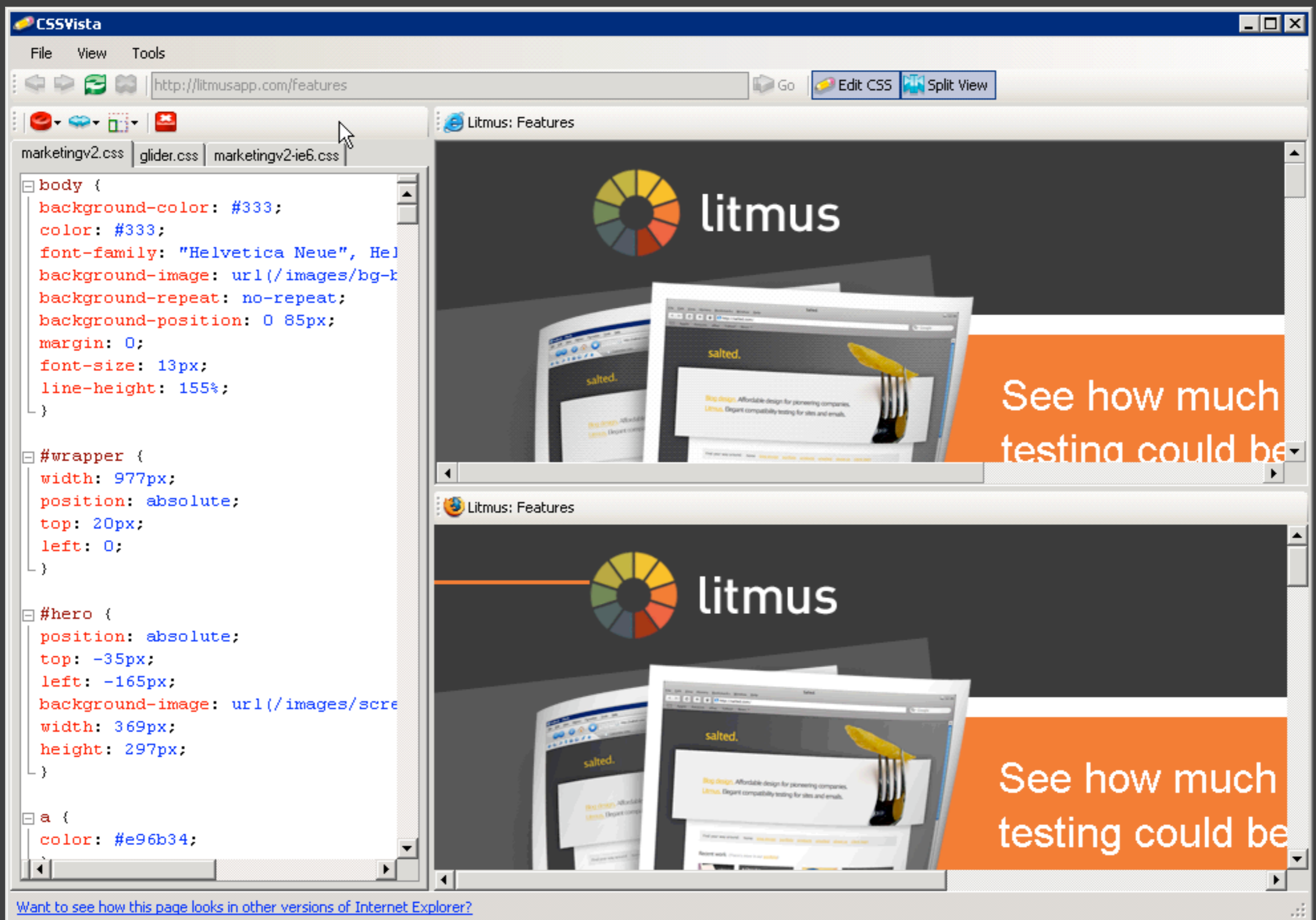


See how much testing could be

[Want to see how this page looks in other versions of Internet Explorer?](#)

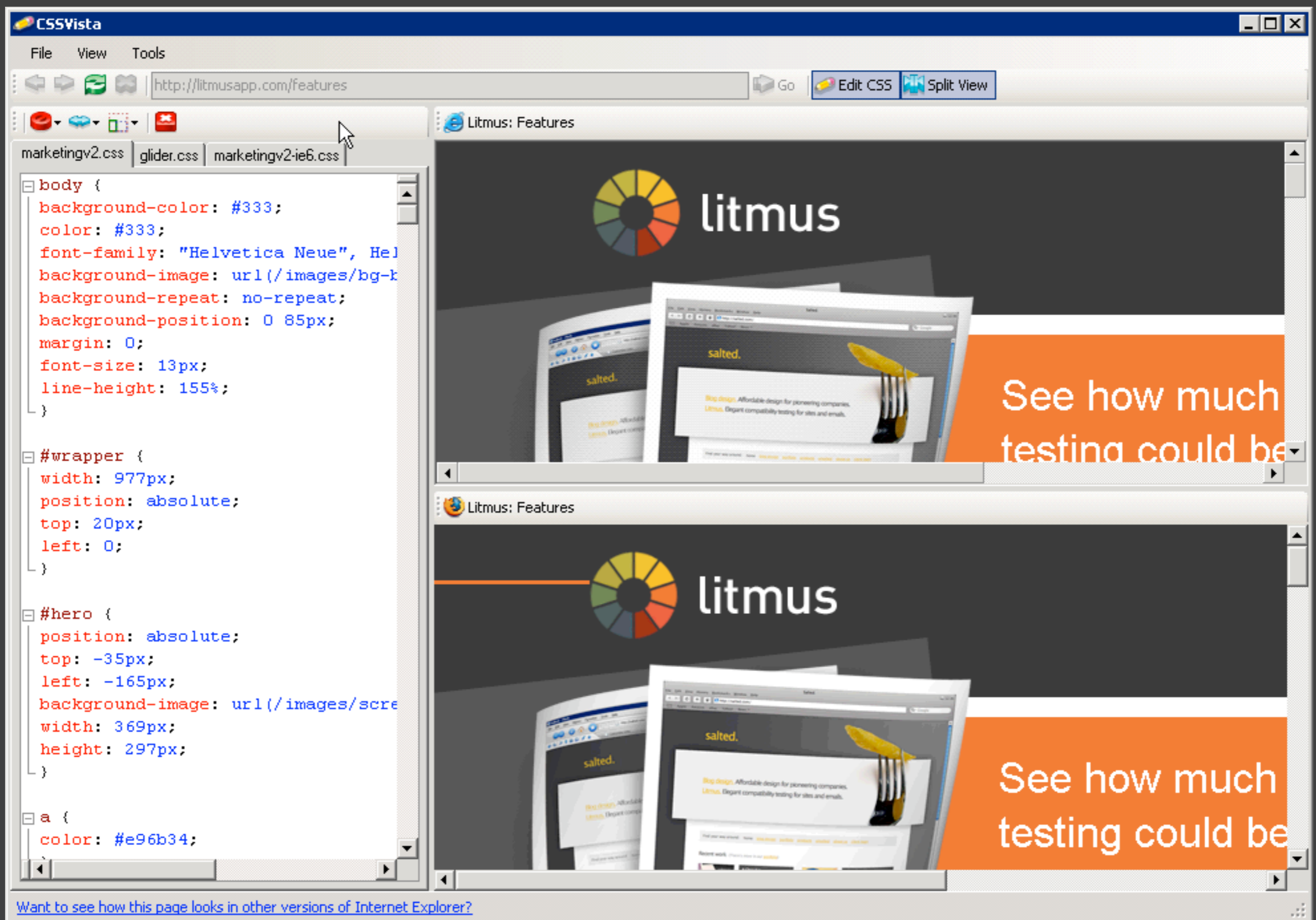
Free





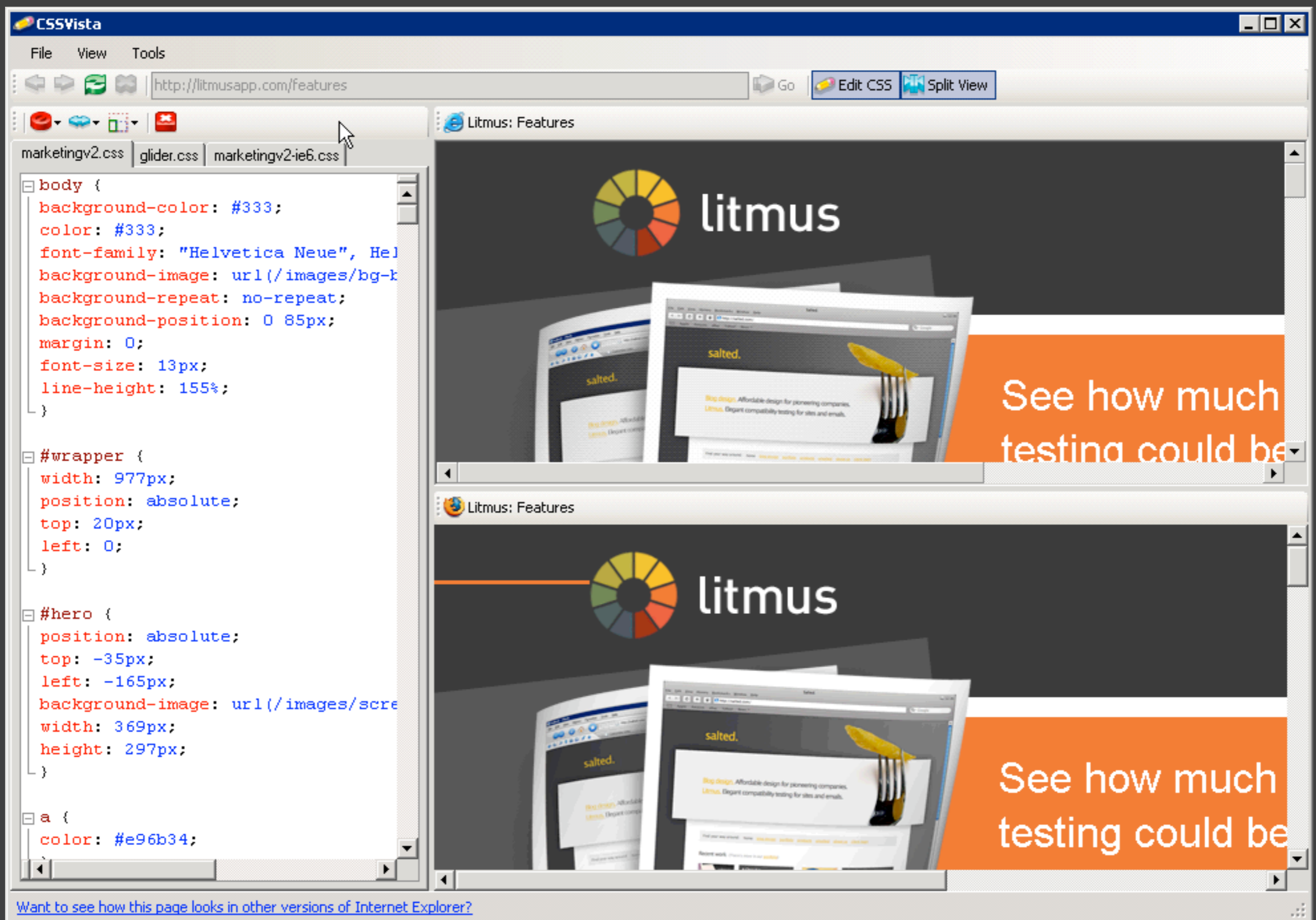
Very valuable

Big problem debugging CSS in IE, as you'll agree!



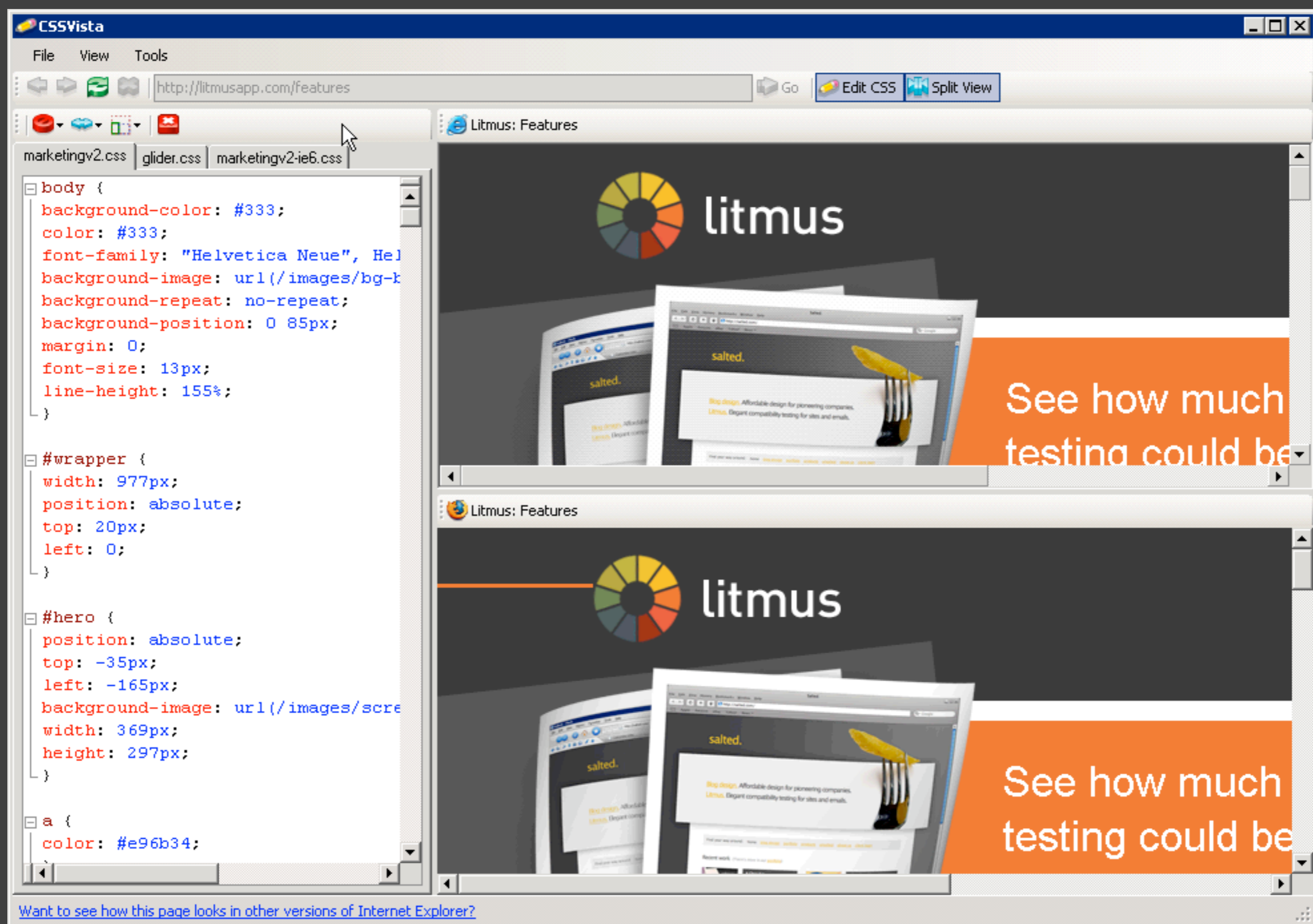
## Complements Litmus' main application

Main site checks dozens of browsers, emails, and publish results



Very qualified visitors

Web designers looking to build compatible pages




Successful: ~15,000 downloads a month

At least 15,000 visitors a month we wouldn't have otherwise had  
No real effort in maintaining that traffic

Things to Do when Paul Visits

http://Alexandrasacker.tadalist.com/lists/show/80b456077dad681c RSS tada list

NEW From the makers of Ta-da List: [Highrise](#) — it's an online address book, contact manager, task list, and more!. [Try it free!](#)

 [My Lists](#) This list: [Edit](#) | [Reorder](#) | Created by Alexandra Asacker on August 22, 2006

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- Reggae Concert?- contact sam
- Dinner at Casa Tapas
- Concerts/Events- contact Paddy + Kendra+Devin
- Karaoke?- Savoy +Trista?
- Lindsay's Party
- One of Gabe's Concerts
- Play Beer Pong and Flip Cup...craft night at cock + bull?
- Watch Snakes on a Plane
- Have a drinking competition
- Go to Schwartz's (with Tom?)
- Ghandi with Lindsay

Keep this shared list on [My Lists](#)

Ads by Google

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Free : advice about the beginning of pregnancy.  
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# Ta Da List

Example of a satellite from 37signals offers, alongside their Basecamp app

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Small feature set

Manage lists

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Free (ad supported)

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Valuable


Everyone uses lists, hundreds of 1000s of people have used ta da



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Complements 37signals' Basecamp app

This to do function forms part of Basecamp

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## Qualified visitors

If you are making lists, likely you may want larger scale organisational app

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Successful: ~900,000 lists created



## Gapingvoid Widget

Example of a satellite Hugh Macleod offers, alongside his main site



## Small feature set

One piece of changing content within a widget, shows just one cartoon

gapingvoid.com

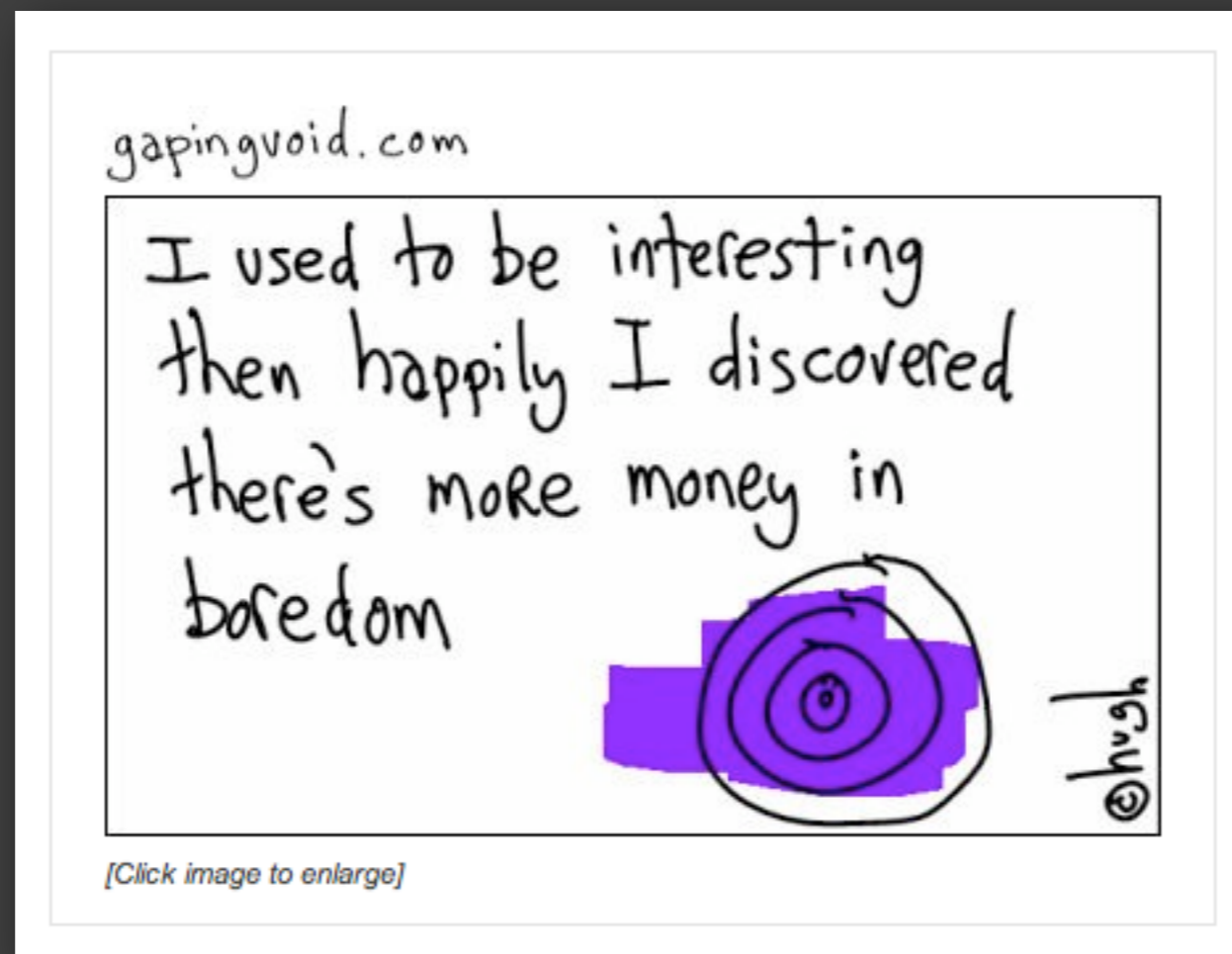
I used to be interesting  
then happily I discovered  
there's more money in  
boredom



©hugh

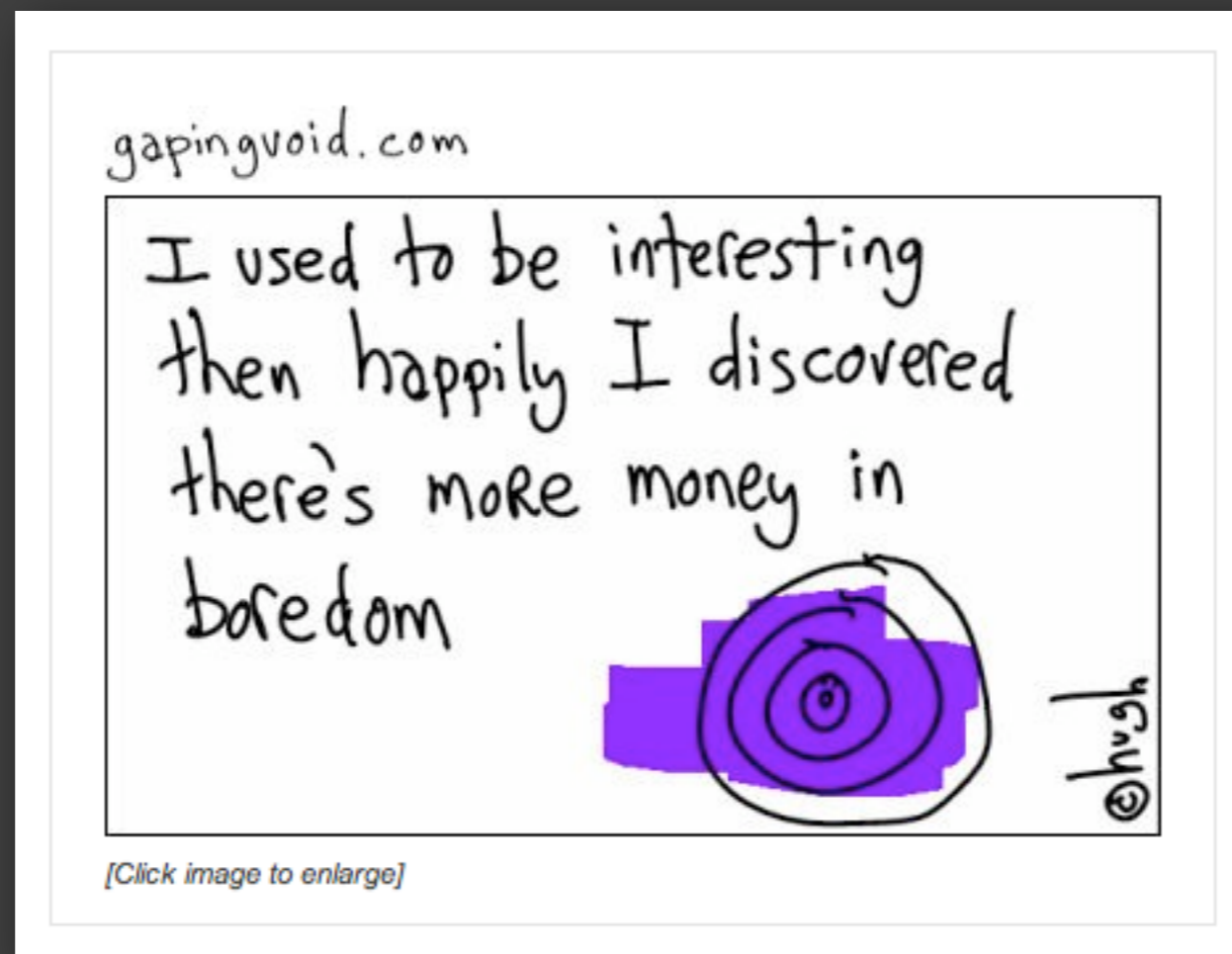
*[Click image to enlarge]*

Free



Valuable to bloggers

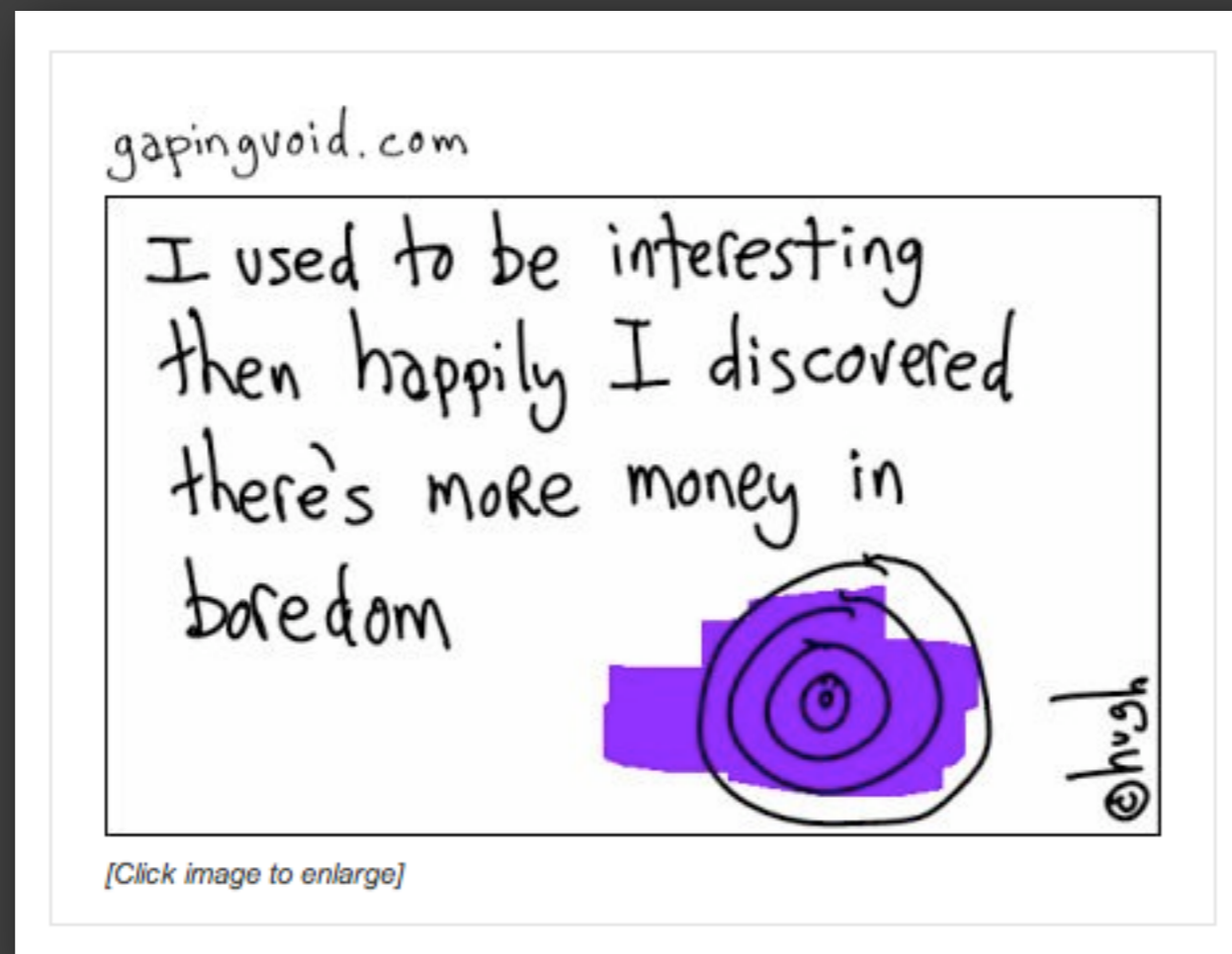
Add original content to their blog/site



Complements Hugh's main site

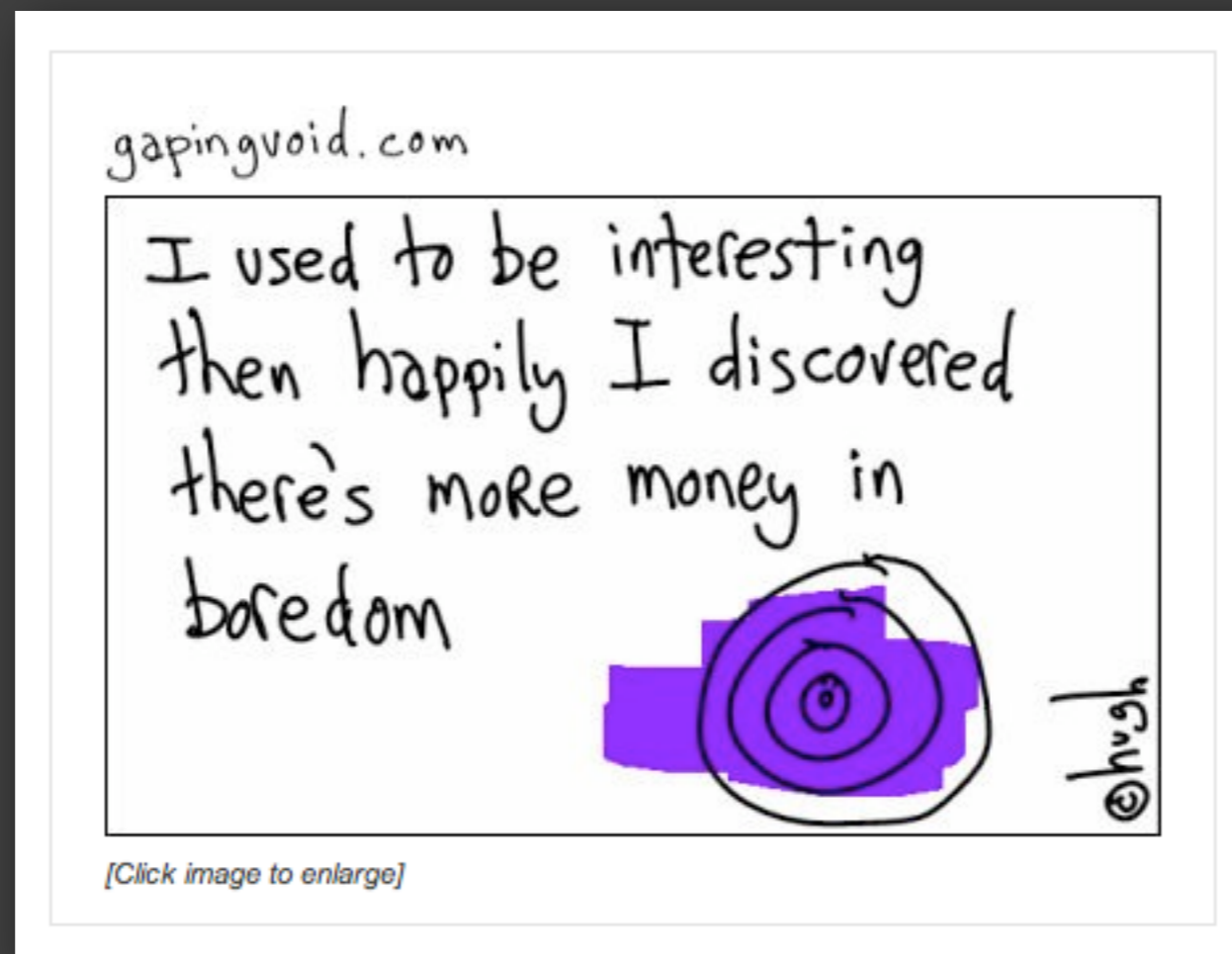
Main site has more cartoons and writing based upon them





## Qualified visitors

If you like the cartoons you'll likely enjoy his writing style and topics



Successful: ~1,000 blogs have it installed

Including Guy Kawasaki and ThinkVitamin

- ★ Small
- ★ Free
- ★ Valuable
- ★ Complementary

Build

# SATELLITES

Seen three examples of satellites which are small, free, valuable, complementary to their main sites

Important to see that they can be software, web apps, or content. All work well as satellites.

★ Dichotomy

★ Our model

# Put a value on your **CONTENT**

Dichotomy: If something has price attached, people value it more.  
BUT, if it costs money, less people will consume it

Our model: Implementing alongside our CSSVista Satellite.

Content free for 7 days, then €8

Creating video tutorials to demonstrate best practices

Will create surge of visitors in 1st 7 days, and people will be more engaged because they value it more highly

- ★ Make connections and develop relationships
- ★ Your company > your name > helpful, interesting
- ★ Build trust
- ★ How?

Join

# COMMUNITIES

How?

- Find communities, forums, discussion lists
- Dive in and BE NORMAL
- Help people, give advice, go to meet ups
- Include a link to your site in signature
- More than just “brand awareness” – insight into your target audience, their needs, problems, opinions

“ [redacted] have just released  
our latest viral game -  
[redacted] ...

It would also be much  
appreciated if you are able to  
pass this on to as many people  
as you can... ”

This is an example of unsuccessful interaction with a community, taken from an email discussion list.

Do it right... share their experience of viral marketing, Flash games, give others ideas about how they could use these tools, what works, etc.

“ Subject: Spam free email

Sorry for the blatant plug but if you are looking for the ULTIMATE email system you might want to check out...

”

This is another example of unsuccessful interaction with a community, taken from an email discussion list.

NEVER start a thread to promote your company/site

Do it right: if someone asked about services for spam filtering, then they could recommend the one they have installed, adding a disclaimer that sell a hosted version of it

- ★ Can't always find perfect community elsewhere
- ★ Easy to develop, hard to make popular
- ★ Great perception of your company
- ★ Learn from your members

## Start your own **COMMUNITY**

### Why?

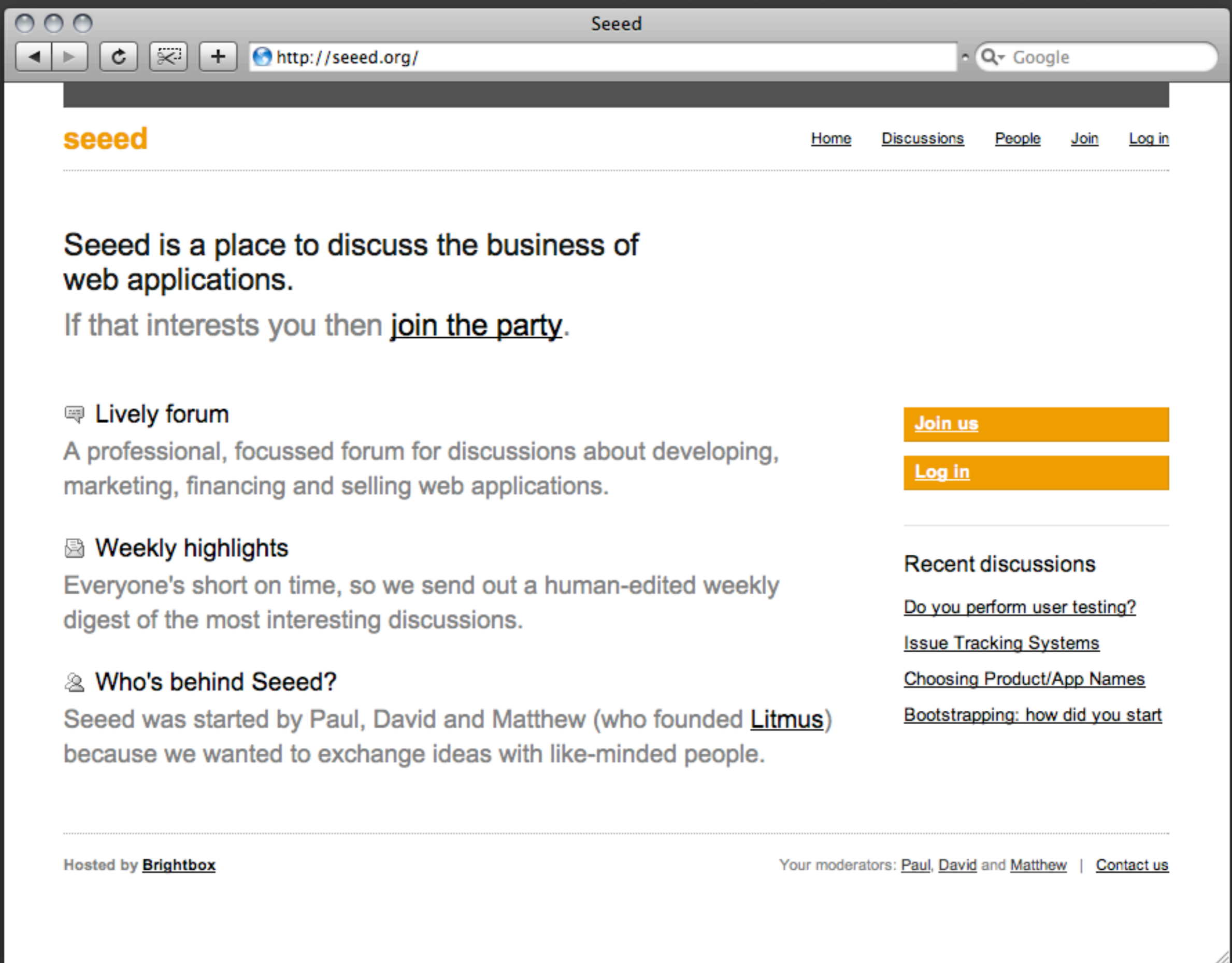
Topics not quite right elsewhere  
Outdated/abandoned  
Full of spam

To make popular: Seed it to related communities, when apt topics arise

### Benefits

Great perception of your company by active users  
More excuses for people to talk about your company  
Learn from your users!





Example of a community Litmus started  
Place to discuss business side of web apps  
1,000+ members  
Linked from high profile sites, e.g. Daring Fireball (4k visitors)  
Great discussions so far

- ★ Enthusiasm
- ★ How?
- ★ Trust
- ★ Passionate users
- ★ Ambassadors

Be

**HUMAN**

Underlies everything I've talked about  
Must be enthusiastic about your site and LET THAT SHOW  
How? Communities, Litmus' live help chat room, personal response to emails  
Takes time, but worth it

All of this builds trust  
Trusting users > passionate users  
Passionate users > ambassadors for your site  
Visitor numbers follow naturally  
When people recommend things, their reputation is on the line

I hope these unconventional techniques have given you ideas and inspiration. I'd be fascinated to hear your experience and ideas on these topics.

Thanks for listening.

Paul Farnell  
paul@litmusapp.com

**LITMUSAPP.COM**  
**SEED.ORG**