

# BIG-IP LTM VE: BIG-IP development just got easier, so don't get left behind



Colin Walker, 2010-23-02

Many people in the networking world are aware of BIG-IP as a powerful load balancing and security device. Those that don't dig deeper, however, are truly missing out on the incredible features just below the surface. Sure load balancing and security policies are interesting and important, but what truly makes BIG-IP stand out from the crowd, at least in my opinion, is the immense breadth of functionality available via the programmatic interfaces of the system, namely iRules, iControl and now tmsh. To me these are the most exciting, intriguing things happening in the market right now. Network side scripting, full API access, on box shell control and customization...how is that stuff *not* wicked cool?

Unfortunately some people haven't caught up quite yet. For whatever reason they're being left behind while the rest of us push forward and try out the newest, coolest

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iRule hoolio posts to the codeshare, or checking out what the new pycontrol bits from Matt can do. If you're one of the people who has been watching from the sidelines, now is the time to dive in. I've seen the same few arguments from people countless times about why they aren't trying to get the most out of their network by using some of these cool technologies. I understand that some people don't have a full test or development lab, I understand that there are often strict change control policies, I get that your boss might not be keen on spending the money on the systems if you're not already a customer, because they don't understand just how powerful this stuff is. I get it, I really do. Now is your chance, though, to change all that.

With the release of the BIG-IP LTM VE all of these roadblocks have been laid asunder with a free, easy to use, readily downloadable and did I mention *free* LTM environment. Now in just a few minutes you can have that test environment you've been pining for so you can start testing crazier iRule-foo. You can get to work on building out custom tmsh commands in 10.1 so they're ready to go when you finally get to upgrade your production systems. You can even put a BIG-IP in front of your test environment to *show* people what it is you've been trying to tell them unsuccessfully all this time while trying to convince them you need some F5 gear: this stuff rocks, and can do amazing stuff.

Getting started is easy, just go check out [the trial page](#) to get started with the download. While that's going, get on over to [the DevCentral LTM VE page](#) and start browsing around. The forums are already exploding with comments, questions and user experiences. See what other people are up to, what environments they've managed to shoe-horn the VE into for their needs, or what cool stuff they're doing with it. In just a few minutes you'll have a shiny, new LTM VE, and no more excuses.

If I sound like a bit of a fanboy, it's because I am. I make it no secret how awesome I think F5 development technologies are, and it just got about a thousand percent easier (perhaps over 9000) to get access to them. Heck, I have 2 BIG-IP systems within arm's reach, and I still use my LTM VE for some of my testing and dev. That's got to mean something, right? Sure, it's rate limited. Sure it's only LTM and not the other modules. Sure there are limitations, but it's a free trial... what do you expect? If you're looking for more features, there's more to come in future releases.

Whether you're a long-time customer, new to the ADC world with F5, are trying to work our gear into your network or you're just trying to figure out what the heck this stuff does, it doesn't matter. Get out there, get the trial, get it installed and start using it. Check out the getting started docs, grab a few iRule examples from the [CodeShare](#) (requires login) and start playing with the possibilities. I'm more than a little bit excited about the sudden and broad availability of LTM to any interested party as not only a traffic management device, but as a development platform. I'm sure you couldn't tell, though...

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