

BIG-IP LTM VE: What is it? Where do I start? Why is everyone so excited?



Colin Walker, 2010-17-02

The already impressive flexibility and power of the BIG-IP takes a giant leap forward with the announcement of the BIG-IP LTM VE. This Virtual Edition of LTM not only allows for extremely easy trial of the technology and an easily attainable resource for local development or testing, but it also shows that no matter how many tricks LTM might have, there's likely one more around the corner.

If you're like me then you're already an F5 user. I use F5 gear just about every day while writing code and content for DevCentral, which I'm sure isn't a shock to anyone. If you're like me then you're also someone that's been looking for a few things for a while now. You've been looking for a way to edit your iRules on the road. You've been looking for a way to test configuration changes & profile tweaks without disrupting your current production (or staging, or test) environment(s). You've been wondering how to try out 10.1 without having to do a full upgrade on your currently running system. If you're like me, you're really, really excited about BIG-IP LTM VE. If any of these scenarios sound familiar, and you're not excited yet, then you should be.

The LTM VE release is a fully functioning BIG-IP LTM that you can run from VMware. All you need is a system running VMware and some free disk space, and you're set. Grab a copy of the files, unpack them, get a free trial license from f5.com, and in just a few minutes you'll be up and running with a fully functional LTM to poke at until your heart's content. It's rate limited to 1Mb/s but that's more than enough for just about any test case I could come up with short of full load traffic shaping tests and the like.

We've had so many requests over the years for exactly this kind of product that I'm extremely excited to be able to talk about it and share just how awesome it is. The PD guys have done a fantastic job making this easy to get started using and approachable. There are good docs to get you started, and even a step by step video walkthrough if you want to follow along from download to passing traffic. While this is some very cool news for all of you current F5 users that have been looking for a new test or dev setup, I'm equally as excited to see what everyone else is going to do with this. This is the first time that anyone that wants it will be able to have access to a BIG-IP device to see just how cool these things are, and I think that's something that shouldn't be overlooked. Suddenly everyone that wants to be able to dig in and see what this technology is all about, what we mean when we talk about ADCs and how powerful they are, how they can help shape your deployments with some pretty incredible business logic on the network, will be able to see it for themselves first hand, with only a small investment in time to do some setup and testing.

All of this is just the beginning, though. There is already talk of more to come. A trial is a fantastic first step but already the masses are clamoring for a more permanent solution. They want to be able to set up their test environments permanently and with less restrictions. Well that just might be coming too. I can't say when or give any details, but rest assured that the BIG-IP LTM VE concept will go far beyond just a free trial for people to play with. While a virtual edition of LTM doesn't offer nearly the same performance or some of the perks of having a full-blown hardware system, there are definitely places where a virtual LTM makes sense, and plans are already in the works to make sure that those needs can be met at some point down the road. Now is the time to get your hands on the LTM VE and get started.

So you're saying, "That's fantastic, but where do I start?". Here's what you'll need to do to get yourself going:

First, download the trial. - <https://www.f5.com/trial/>

This will require you to log in, so get registered if you're not already. Once you log in you'll be able to select the trial version you want (there's only one for now) and download it.

Next, generate a license. - <https://www.f5.com/trial/secure/generate-eval-key.php>

You won't be able to do anything with the shiny new image you just downloaded until you get it licensed, so make sure you go get yourself a trial license so you can make the blinky lights blink and the bits flow. This license will get you access to the core LTM functionality in the trial, so you'll have access to all sorts of cool toys like iControl and iRules.

After that, you'll need to get your new BIG-IP LTM VE system configured just like you normally would configure a BIG-IP. You'll need self IPs and VLANs and all that. If you're not familiar with setting up BIG-IP then check out one or both of these:

- George Watkins' easy to follow ["Getting the LTM VE Trial Running" walkthrough video](#).

In this video George walks you through the setup process all the way from downloading the image to licensing to configuring the BIG-IP itself to passing traffic. This is a great place to start for anyone, whether you're a beginner or a pro looking for a refresher. Things move kind of fast so if you have any questions or don't catch something in the video, the best place to go first is the release notes.

- The [BIG-IP Virtual Edition Trial Release Notes](#).

The release notes have just about all the information you could want about the VE. What platforms it runs on, what the restrictions of the trial version are, what to do to get it configured, known issues, etc. This is a one stop shop of useful information that everyone downloading the trial should check out. If you've got questions about how to get started, what this thing can do or just about anything having to do with the trial, I'd check here first.

Once you've got things up and running, you've got your own personal BIG-IP playground. Now it's time to see what it can do, and I can't recommend a better place for finding cool things to try out than DevCentral. Test out some iRules, play with a custom monitor or two, write some TMSH scripts...whatever it is you've been eager to play with but were afraid to try on your production system (or maybe you didn't have a system at all), now's the time.

Be sure to check back with the [BIG-IP LTM VE section on DevCentral](#) often to keep up with updates. There's a forum here for discussing and sharing ideas, tips or problems with the trial. It will hopefully be a great place to see what other people are up to and figure out issues if you're having them, or even just to share feedback of your LTM VE experience. Heck, there has already been some interesting info from some users there talking about how, even though it's not technically supported, they've gotten the LTM VE running in virtualbox, VMware Player, fusion, etc. So there's already some interesting talk there that you won't want to miss out on. There will also be a steady stream of content showing off some of the things you can do with the trial, both from the DevCentral team and other folks inside F5 who are eager to show off what they're up to with this exciting new release. Be sure to let us know what you think about the trial VE or what you're up to with it, the more we hear back from the people using it the better we can make the next one.

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