

Docker Machine, Compose, and Swarm How They Work Together

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by [Jonas Rosland](#) | [9 Comments](#)

Development

During the past year, Docker has been hard at work creating simple tools to manage containers (Machine), manage multiple containers linked together (Compose), and manage a swarm of containers (Swarm).

Even though they are meant to be simple, these tools are very powerful. You can run off and deploy tons of containers on top of your favorite Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) provider. Light on why they're great to have in your toolbox, where they should be.

Docker Machine, Compose, and Swarm are simple, but they do require some planning.

The three tools are now neatly packaged into what's called the Docker CLI. Before you continue further.

Docker Machine

The first tool we'll look at from the toolbox is Docker Machine, which is one of the most popular Infrastructure-as-a-Service platforms. Of course, there are other virtualization platforms: VMware Fusion and VirtualBox, but it also supports cloud providers: DigitalOcean, Exoscale, Google Compute Engine, OpenStack, RackSpace, and Amazon EC2.

Let's start with getting a container host up and running on your local machine. If you have a Docker Toolbox you also got VirtualBox installed, so let's use that to create a container host, just run the following command:

```
1 | $ docker-machine create --driver virtualbox
```

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```
1 # docker-machine create --driver virtualbox
2 Creating VirtualBox VM...
3 Creating SSH key...
4 Starting VirtualBox VM...
5 Starting VM...
6 To see how to connect Docker to this machine
```

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This command will tell Docker Machine to use the VirtualBox driver to create the container host. We now have a place to run our containers! Let's connect to the container host using the following:

```
1 | eval "$(docker-machine env containerhost)"
```

If you're used to working with Boot2Docker, the predecessor of Docker Machine, you'll find the familiar `boot2docker shellinit` command.

After the eval of your Docker Machine env variables, you can now run `run`, `pull`, `ps`, `rm`, etc. Try it out!

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Docker Compose

Now that we have a container host up and running, we'll focus more on managing our containers. We'll use Docker Compose for this. It's actually built on Docker's first company called Orchard that had created a multi-container management tool. A team from Orchard continued the great work that Orchard had started with Docker Compose late last year.

Docker Compose has a simple way of describing an application as services that should be linked, and what ports should be exposed to the end user. It's defined in a "docker-compose.yml" file; let's look at an example and build it.

```
1 web:
2   build: .
3   ports:
4     - "5000:5000"
5   volumes:
6     - ./code
7   links:
8     - redis
9 redis:
10  image: redis
```

Here we have one application built using two containers. The first container is the Dockerfile that we have in the current working directory. This is great but we haven't pushed it up to a registry yet.

The next row shows which ports will be exposed on the host and which on the container. The third part shows that we will mount a Docker volume in the container. Then lastly we will link to another container that we call "redis," which is an image from the Docker Hub.

Now to run this, we issue the following command:

```
1 $ docker-compose up
```

This will read the docker-compose.yml and create the application environment. It will build the web application from the Dockerfile as well as pulling down the redis image. It will look something like this:

```
1 $ docker-compose up
2 Pulling redis (redis:latest)...
3 <snip>
4 Creating compose_redis_1...
5 Building web...
6 Step 0 : FROM python:2.7
7 2.7: Pulling from python
8 <snip>
9 Successfully built b88dd767cf97
10 Creating compose_web_1...
11 Attaching to compose_redis_1, compose_web_1
12 <snip>
13 redis_1 | 1:M 11 Sep 21:21:56.463 # Server
14 <snip>
```

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```
15 | web_1 | * Running on http://0.0.0.0:5000/ (
16 | web_1 | * Restarting with stat
```

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There you have it! You have successfully used Docker Compose to create services: one an outward-facing web service and the other a persistent page to verify the application is running.

To find the IP of your container host, run the following command:

```
1 | $ docker-machine ip containerhost
2 | 192.168.99.101
```

Since we have also made sure we open up port 5000 on the container, you should now be able to connect to <http://192.168.99.101:5000>. You should see "seen 1 times." You are now hitting a website that's storing a hit counter, retrieving that value on each new hit on the website and persisting it.

All right, now that we've explained the basics of Docker Compose, it's

Docker Swarm

Finally, let's look at the most interesting tool in the current Docker Toolbox. It works with one container host and runs a container or two, which is great. In Docker Swarm we're now going to turn that small test environment into something that can be used to scale your operations into something even more powerful. It involves things like service discovery, clustering, and remote management.

Let's start by cleaning up the environment we have so we don't run into issues. Stop and remove the current local container host by running

```
1 | $ docker-machine stop containerhost
2 | exit status 1
3 | $ docker-machine rm containerhost
4 | Successfully removed containerhost
```

Now let's begin by creating a new fresh container host that we will use.

```
1 | $ docker-machine create -d virtualbox local
```

This creates a new container host for us called "local." Get the right command running:

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```
1 | eval "$(docker-machine env local)"
```

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Now we need to generate what's called a "discovery token" that will be used to verify that nodes are part of the correct cluster:

```
1 | $ docker run swarm create
2 | <snip>
3 | Status: Downloaded newer image for swarm:latest
4 | 8d7dc66346a3e0d999ed38dd29ed0d38
```

That last line is your discovery token and will be different from mine. Docker's public discovery service. You can find the information it keeps at <https://discovery.hub.docker.com/v1/clusters/YOURTOKENHERE>. You can add members including the Swarm Master that we create like this:

```
1 | $ docker-machine create -d virtualbox --swarm
```

Now we'll create our two first Swarm nodes:

```
docker-machine create -d virtualbox --swarm --swarm-master
docker-machine create -d virtualbox --swarm --swarm-worker
```

You can now also shut down and remove the "local" container host; we'll do that later.

Now let's make sure your shell is pointing to the Swarm Master:

```
1 | eval $(docker-machine env --swarm swarm-master)
```

You now have a Swarm Master and two Swarm Nodes running locally:

```
1 | $ docker info
2 | Containers: 4
3 | Images: 3
4 | Role: primary
5 | Strategy: spread
6 | Filters: affinity, health, constraint, port
7 | Nodes: 3
8 |   swarm-agent-00: 192.168.99.104:2376
9 |     L Containers: 1
10 |    L Reserved CPUs: 0 / 1
11 |    L Reserved Memory: 0 B / 1.022 GiB
12 |    L Labels: executiondriver=native-0.2, kubernetes
13 |   swarm-agent-01: 192.168.99.105:2376
14 |     L Containers: 1
15 |    L Reserved CPUs: 0 / 1
```

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```

16 | L Reserved Memory: 0 B / 1.022 GiB
17 | L Labels: executiondriver=native-0.2, k
18 | swarm-master: 192.168.99.103:2376
19 | L Containers: 2
20 | L Reserved CPUs: 0 / 1
21 | L Reserved Memory: 0 B / 1.022 GiB
22 | L Labels: executiondriver=native-0.2, k
23 | CPUs: 3
24 | Total Memory: 3.065 GiB
25 | Name: 054cb8519400

```

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That's really cool! You now have full control over a cluster of containers. I think that's really fantastic!

You can now try to run containers just like normal. Sometimes it takes a unique ID of the container, so just wait until it comes back:

```

1 | $ docker run -d redis 0d7af2492be35cc9c7593
2 | $ docker run -d nginx 0babf055abf9b487b6baf

```

And now list the containers to see that they're being scheduled on different hostnames:

```

1 | $ docker ps
2 | CONTAINER ID      IMAGE      COMMAND
3 | 0babf055abf9      nginx      "nginx -g 'daemon
4 | 0d7af2492be3      redis      "/entrypoint.sh r

```

Awesome job! You now have a cluster of container hosts that you can connect across.

Unfortunately, the integration between Docker Compose and Docker Swarm is not being done to have them properly compatible in the near future; you

Until then, have fun coming up with interesting applications that can

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Thomas

Great Article!!! Do you know how i set a static ip to boot a VM in
VBox because Hyper-V hasn't the ability to set ip only a
Thank's

nanekratzke

Really nice post. I added it to valuable docker links.

<http://www.nkcode.io/2014/08/24/valuable-docker-links/>

Manuel Weiss @codeship

Very cool, thanks!

Nissan Dookeran

Thanks for this. The Dockerfile link in the section that Docker Compose leads to a dead link though.

Brandon Stiles

Brilliant. Thanks for the info!

Pingback: [DevOps: OpenStack + Docker Swarm | 12 : 100%](#)

thusspokez

Thanks, the best post I have read about Docker tools and the practical examples.

Bernard Labno

Well done, this article helped me a lot! Thank you Jonathan! You could mention about IP problems when you restart (may be advertising addresses from previous machine with different IP).

This problem has not been resolved yet nicely apart from containers of swarm agents and masters.

Davide Bertola

Something i don't understand. If I do `docker-machine get "Error response from daemon: This node is not a swarm member" number of other commands (docker swarm *, docker deploy swarm nodes using -swarm -swarm-master c

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