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# Build a Secure API in PHP Using Laravel Passport



Build a Secure Laravel API  
using Laravel Passport

There is no way to avoid the topic of RESTful APIs when building backend resources for a mobile application or using any of the modern JavaScript frameworks. If by chance you are unaware, an API is an interface or code in this case, that allows two software programs to communicate with each other. Notably, it does not maintain session state between requests, hence, you will need to use tokens to authenticate and authorize users of your application.

Laravel makes building such a resource easy with a predefined provision for you to secure it appropriately. This tutorial will teach you how to build and secure your Laravel back-end API using Laravel passport. When we are finished, you will have learned how to secure your new Laravel API or provide an extra layer of security to existing ones.

## Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of building applications with Laravel will be of help in this tutorial. Also, you need to ensure that you have installed Composer globally to manage dependencies. Lastly, Postman will be needed to test our endpoints.

## What We'll Build

To demonstrate how to build a secure Laravel API, we'll build an API that will be used to create a list of top tech CEOs. This application will list the following about each CEO:

- Name
- The year they became CEO
- Headquarters of their company and
- What their company does

To secure this application, we will install Laravel Passport and generate an access token for each user after authentication. This will allow such users to have access to some of the secured endpoints.

## Getting Started

To begin, you can either use [Composer](#) or [Laravel installer](#) to quickly scaffold a new Laravel application on your computer. Follow the instructions [here on Laravel's official website](#) to set up the Laravel installer. Once you are done, run the following command:

```
1 | $ laravel new laravel-backend-api
```

To install the same application using [Composer](#) run the following command:

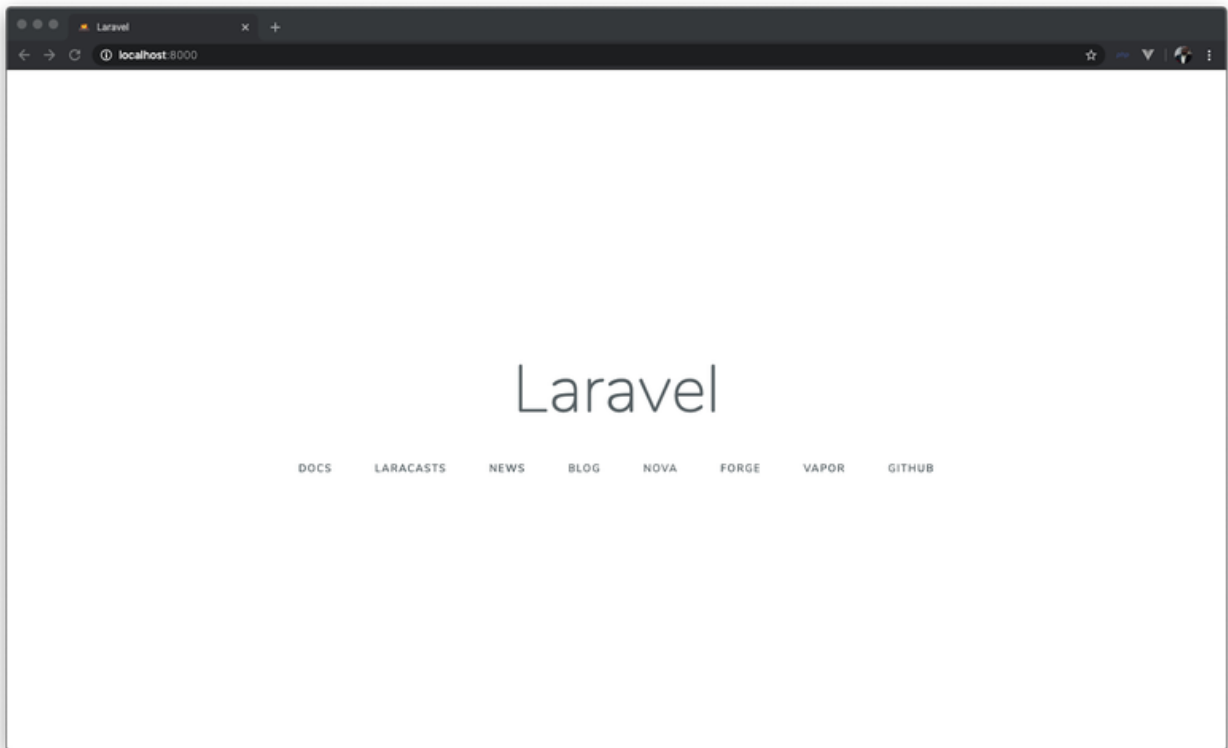
```
1 | $ composer create-project --prefer-dist laravel/laravel laravel-backend-api
```

Depending on your preferred choice, the preceding commands will create a new folder named `laravel-backend-api` within the development folder, you installed Laravel and its dependencies in.

You can move into the newly created folder and run the application using the in built-in Laravel [Artisan](#) command as shown here:

```
1 | // move into the project
2 | $ cd laravel-backend-api
3 |
4 | // run the application
5 | $ php artisan serve
```

Navigate to <http://localhost:8000> from your browser to view the welcome page:



## Create a Database and Connect to It

Now that Laravel is installed and running, the next step is to create a connection to your database. First, ensure that you have created a database and then update the values of the following variables within the `.env` file:

- `DB_DATABASE`
- `DB_USERNAME`
- `DB_PASSWORD`

The database is all set, but before we start building our API, we need to install and configure Laravel Passport.

## Install And Configure Laravel Passport

Laravel Passport provides a full OAuth2 server implementation for Laravel applications. With it, you can easily generate a personal access token to uniquely identify a currently authenticated

user. This token will then be attached to every request allowing each user access protected routes. To begin, stop the application from running by hitting `CTRL + C` on your computer's keyboard and install Laravel Passport using Composer as shown here:

```
1 | $ composer require laravel/passport
```

Once the installation is complete, a new migration file containing the tables needed to store clients and access tokens will have been generated for your application. Run the following command to migrate your database:

```
1 | $ php artisan migrate
```

Next, to create the encryption keys needed to generate secured access tokens, run the command below:

```
1 | $ php artisan passport:install
```

Immediately after the installation process from the preceding command is finished, add the `Laravel\Passport\HasApiTokens` trait to your `App\User` model as shown here:

```
1 | // app/User.php
2 |
3 | <?php
4 |
5 | namespace App;
6 |
7 | ...
8 | use Laravel\Passport\HasApiTokens; // include this
9 |
10 | class User extends Authenticatable
11 | {
12 |     use Notifiable, HasApiTokens; // update this line
13 |
14 |     ...
15 | }
```

One of the benefits of this trait is the access to a few helper methods that your model can use to inspect the authenticated user's token and scopes.

Now, to register the routes necessary to issue and revoke access tokens (personal and client), you will call the `Passport::routes` method within the `boot` method of your

`AuthServiceProvider`. To do this, open the `app/Providers/AuthServiceProvider` file and update its content as shown below:

```
1 // app/Providers/AuthServiceProvider.php
2
3 <?php
4
5 namespace App\Providers;
6
7 use Illuminate\Foundation\Support\Providers\AuthServiceProvider as ServiceProvider;
8 use Illuminate\Support\Facades\Gate;
9 use Laravel\Passport\Passport; // add this
10
11 class AuthServiceProvider extends ServiceProvider
12 {
13     /**
14      * The policy mappings for the application.
15      *
16      * @var array
17      */
18     protected $policies = [
19         'App\Model' => 'App\Policies\ModelPolicy', // uncomment this
20     ];
21
22     /**
23      * Register any authentication / authorization services.
24      *
25      * @return void
26      */
27     public function boot()
28     {
29         $this->registerPolicies();
30
31         Passport::routes(); // Add this
32     }
33 }
```

After registering `Passport::routes()`, Laravel Passport is almost ready to handle all authentication and authorization processes within your application.

Finally, for your application to be ready to use Passport's `TokenGuard`

to authenticate any incoming API requests, open the `config/auth` configuration file and set the `driver` option of the `api` authentication guard to `passport`:

```
1 // config/auth
2
3 <?php
4
5 return [
6     ...
7
8     'guards' => [
9         'web' => [
10             'driver' => 'session',
11             'provider' => 'users',
12         ],
13
14         'api' => [
15             'driver' => 'passport', // set this to passport
16             'provider' => 'users',
17             'hash' => false,
18         ],
19     ],
20
21     ...
22 ];
```

## Create a Migration File for the Company

Every new installation of Laravel comes with a pre-generated *User* model and migration file. This is useful for maintaining a standard database structure for your database. Open the `app/User.php` file and ensure that it is similar to this:

```
1 // app/User.php
2
3 <?php
4
5 namespace App;
6
7 use Illuminate\Contracts\Auth\MustVerifyEmail;
8 use Illuminate\Foundation\Auth\User as Authenticatable;
9 use Illuminate\Notifications\Notifiable;
10 use Laravel\Passport\HasApiTokens;
11
12 class User extends Authenticatable
13 {
14     use Notifiable, HasApiTokens;
15
16     /**
17      * The attributes that are mass assignable.
18      *
19      * @var array
20      */
21     protected $fillable = [
22         'name', 'email', 'password',
23     ];
24
25     /**
26      * The attributes that should be hidden for arrays.
27      *
28      * @var array
29      */
30     protected $hidden = [
31         'password', 'remember_token',
32     ];
33
34     /**
35      * The attributes that should be cast to native types.
36      *
37      * @var array
38      */
39     protected $casts = [
40         'email_verified_at' => 'datetime',
41     ];
42 }
```

Also for the user migration file in database/migrations/\*\*\*\_create\_users\_table.php :



```
1  <?php
2
3  use Illuminate\Database\Migrations\Migration;
4  use Illuminate\Database\Schema\Blueprint;
5  use Illuminate\Support\Facades\Schema;
6
7  class CreateUsersTable extends Migration
8  {
9      /**
10       * Run the migrations.
11       *
12       * @return void
13       */
14     public function up()
15     {
16         Schema::create('users', function (Blueprint $table) {
17             $table->id();
18             $table->string('name');
19             $table->string('email')->unique();
20             $table->timestamp('email_verified_at')->nullable();
21             $table->string('password');
22             $table->rememberToken();
23             $table->timestamps();
24         });
25     }
26
27     /**
28      * Reverse the migrations.
29      *
30      * @return void
31      */
32     public function down()
33     {
34         Schema::dropIfExists('users');
35     }
36 }
```

The fields specified in the file above will suffice for the credentials required from the users of our application, hence there will be no need to modify it.

Next, we will use the `artisan` command to create a model instance and generate a database migration file for the *CEO* table:

```
1 | $ php artisan make:model CEO -m
```

The preceding command will create a `model` within the `app` directory and a new migration file in `database/migrations` folder. The `-m` option is short for `--migration` and it tells the artisan command to create a migration file for our model. Next, open the newly created migration file and update its content as shown here:

```
1  <?php
2
3  use Illuminate\Database\Migrations\Migration;
4  use Illuminate\Database\Schema\Blueprint;
5  use Illuminate\Support\Facades\Schema;
6
7  class CreateCEOStable extends Migration
8  {
9      /**
10       * Run the migrations.
11       *
12       * @return void
13       */
14     public function up()
15     {
16         Schema::create('c_e_o_s', function (Blueprint $table) {
17             $table->id();
18             $table->string('name');
19             $table->string('company_name');
20             $table->year('year');
21             $table->string('company_headquarters');
22             $table->string('what_company_does');
23             $table->timestamps();
24         });
25     }
26
27     /**
28      * Reverse the migrations.
29      *
30      * @return void
31      */
32     public function down()
33     {
34         Schema::dropIfExists('c_e_o_s');
35     }
36 }
```

Here, we included `name` , `company_name` , `year` , `company_headquarters` and `what_company_does` fields.

Now open the `app/CEO.php` file and use the following content for it:

```
1  <?php
2
3  namespace App;
4
5  use Illuminate\Database\Eloquent\Model;
6
7  class CEO extends Model
8  {
9      protected $fillable = [
10         'name', 'company_name', 'year', 'company_headquarters', 'what_
11     ];
12 }
13
```

Here, we specified the attributes that should be mass assignable, as all Eloquent models protect against mass-assignment by default.

Run the migration command again to update the database with the newly created table and fields using the following command:

```
1 | $ php artisan migrate
```

Now that the database is updated, we will proceed to create controllers for the application. We will also create a couple of endpoints that will handle registration, login, and creating the details of a CEO as explained earlier.

## Create controllers

Controllers accept incoming HTTP requests and redirect them to the appropriate action or methods to process such requests and return the appropriate response. Since we are building

an API, most of the responses will be in JSON format. This is mostly considered the standard format for RESTful APIs.

## Authentication controller

We will start by using the `artisan` command to generate an *Authentication Controller* for our application. This controller will process and handle requests for registration and login for a user into the application.

```
1 | $ php artisan make:controller API/AuthController
```

This will create a new `API` folder within `app/Http/Controllers` and then creates a new file named `AuthController.php` within it. Open the newly created controller file and use the following content for it:

```
1  <?php
2
3  namespace App\Http\Controllers\API;
4
5  use App\Http\Controllers\Controller;
6  use App\User;
7  use Illuminate\Http\Request;
8
9  class AuthController extends Controller
10 {
11     public function register(Request $request)
12     {
13         $validatedData = $request->validate([
14             'name' => 'required|max:55',
15             'email' => 'email|required|unique:users',
16             'password' => 'required|confirmed'
17         ]);
18
19         $validatedData['password'] = bcrypt($request->password);
20
21         $user = User::create($validatedData);
22
23         $accessToken = $user->createToken('authToken')->accessToken;
24
25         return response([ 'user' => $user, 'access_token' => $accessToken
26     ]
27
28     public function login(Request $request)
29     {
30         $loginData = $request->validate([
31             'email' => 'email|required',
32             'password' => 'required'
33         ]);
34
35         if (!auth()->attempt($loginData)) {
36             return response(['message' => 'Invalid Credentials']);
37         }
38
39         $accessToken = auth()->user()->createToken('authToken')->accessToken;
40
41         return response(['user' => auth()->user(), 'access_token' => $accessToken
42     ]
43 }
44 }
```

The `register` method above handled the registration process for users of our application. To handle validation and ensure that all the required fields for registration are filled, we used Laravel's validation method. This validator will ensure that the `name`, `email`, `password` and `password_confirmation` fields are required and return the appropriate feedback.

Lastly, the `login` method ensures that the appropriate credentials are inputted before authenticating a user. If authenticated successfully, an `accessToken` is generated to uniquely identify the logged in user and send a JSON response. Any subsequent HTTP requests sent to a secured or protected route will require that the generated `accessToken` be passed as an Authorization header for the process to be successful. Otherwise, the user will receive an unauthenticated response.

## Creating the CEO Controller

Here, you will use the same `artisan` command to automatically create a new controller. This time around we will create an API resource controller. Laravel resource controllers are controllers that handle all HTTP requests for a particular Model. In this case, we want to create a controller that will handle all requests for the `CEO` model, which include creating, reading, updating, and deleting. To achieve this, run the following command:

```
1 | $ php artisan make:controller API/CEOController --api --model=CEO
```

The command above will generate an API resource controller that does not include the `create` and `edit` view since we are only building APIs. Navigate to `app/Http/Controllers/API/CEOController.php` and update its contents as shown below:

```
1  <?php
2
3  namespace App\Http\Controllers\API;
4
5  use App\CEO;
6  use App\Http\Controllers\Controller;
7  use App\Http\Resources\CEOResource;
8  use Illuminate\Http\Request;
9  use Illuminate\Support\Facades\Validator;
10
11  class CEOController extends Controller
```

```

11  class CEOController extends Controller
12  {
13      /**
14       * Display a listing of the resource.
15       *
16       * @return \Illuminate\Http\Response
17       */
18      public function index()
19      {
20          $ceos = CEO::all();
21          return response([ 'ceos' => CEOResource::collection($ceos), 'message' => 'All CEOs' ], 200);
22      }
23
24      /**
25       * Store a newly created resource in storage.
26       *
27       * @param \Illuminate\Http\Request $request
28       * @return \Illuminate\Http\Response
29       */
30      public function store(Request $request)
31      {
32          $data = $request->all();
33
34          $validator = Validator::make($data, [
35              'name' => 'required|max:255',
36              'year' => 'required|max:255',
37              'company_headquarters' => 'required|max:255',
38              'what_company_does' => 'required'
39          ]);
40
41          if($validator->fails()){
42              return response(['error' => $validator->errors(), 'Validation failed'], 422);
43          }
44
45          $ceo = CEO::create($data);
46
47          return response([ 'ceo' => new CEOResource($ceo), 'message' => 'CEO created' ], 201);
48      }
49
50      /**
51       * Display the specified resource.
52       *
53       * @param \App\CEO $ceo
54       * @return \Illuminate\Http\Response
55       */
56      public function show(CEO $ceo)
57      {

```

```
58         return response([ 'ceo' => new CEOResource($ceo), 'message' =>
59
60     ]
61 );
62
63 /**
64  * Update the specified resource in storage.
65  *
66  * @param \Illuminate\Http\Request $request
67  * @param \App\CEO $ceo
68  * @return \Illuminate\Http\Response
69  */
70 public function update(Request $request, CEO $ceo)
71 {
72     $ceo->update($request->all());
73
74     return response([ 'ceo' => new CEOResource($ceo), 'message' =>
75
76 ]
77 );
78
79 /**
80  * Remove the specified resource from storage.
81  *
82  * @param \App\CEO $ceo
83  * @return \Illuminate\Http\Response
84  * @throws \Exception
85  */
86 public function destroy(CEO $ceo)
87 {
88     $ceo->delete();
89
90     return response(['message' => 'Deleted']);
91 }
```

A quick view at the code snippet above shows that we created five different methods; each housing logic to carry out a particular function. Here is an overview of what each method does:

- `index` : This method retrieves the entire list of CEOs from the database and returns it as a resource collection in a JSON structure. More details about the Laravel resource collection will be shared in the next section.



- `store` : This method receives the instance of the HTTP request to create new CEO details via dependency injection using `$request` to retrieve all the values posted. It also ensures that all the required fields are not submitted as an empty request. Lastly, it returns the information of the newly created CEO details as a JSON response.
- `show` : This method uniquely identifies a particular CEO and returns the details as a JSON response.
- `update` : This receives the HTTP request and the particular item that needs to be edited as a parameter. It runs an update on the instance of the model passed into it and returns the appropriate response.
- `destroy` : This method receives the instance of a particular item that needs to be deleted and removes it from the database.

Some methods require a specific model `ID` to uniquely verify an item such as `show()` , `update()` , and `destroy()` . One thing to note here is that we were able to inject the model instances directly. This is due to using implicit route model binding in Laravel.

Once in place, Laravel will help to inject the instance `CEO` into our methods and return a `404` status code if not found. This makes it very easy to use the instance of the model directly, without necessarily running a query to retrieve the model that corresponds to that `ID` .

You can read more about implicit route model binding [here on the official documentation of Laravel](#).

## Create a Resource

Laravel Eloquent resources allow you to convert your models and collections into JSON format. It works as a data transformation layer between the database and the controllers. This helps provide a uniform interface that can be used wherever you need it within your application. Let's create one for our `CEO` model by using the following command:

```
1 | $ php artisan make:resource CEOResource
```

This will create a new resource file named `CEOResource.php` within the `app/Http/Resources` directory. Go ahead and open the newly created file. The content will look like this:

```
1  <?php
2
3  namespace App\Http\Resources;
4
5  use Illuminate\Http\Resources\Json\JsonResource;
6
7  class CEOResource extends JsonResource
8  {
9      /**
10       * Transform the resource into an array.
11       *
12       * @param \Illuminate\Http\Request $request
13       * @return array
14       */
15     public function toArray($request)
16     {
17         return parent::toArray($request);
18     }
19 }
```

The `parent::toArray($request)` inside the `toArray()` method will automatically convert all visible model attributes as part of the JSON response.

Gain a deeper understanding of the benefits offered by Eloquent resources [here](#).

## Update Routes File

To complete the set up of the endpoints for the methods created within our controllers, update the `routes.api.php` file with the following contents:

```
1  Route::post('/register', 'Api\AuthController@register');
2  Route::post('/login', 'Api\AuthController@login');
3
4  Route::apiResource('/ceo', 'Api\CEOController')->middleware('auth:api');
```

To view the entire list of the routes created for this application, run the following command from the terminal:

```
1 | $ php artisan route:list
```

You will see similar contents as shown below:

Domain	Method	URI	Name	Action
Middleware				
	GET/HEAD	/		Closure
web				
	POST	api/ceo	ceo.store	App\Http\Controllers\Api\CEOController@store
api,auth:api				
	GET/HEAD	api/ceo	ceo.index	App\Http\Controllers\Api\CEOController@index
api,auth:api				
	DELETE	api/ceo/{ceo}	ceo.destroy	App\Http\Controllers\Api\CEOController@destroy
api,auth:api				
	PUT/PATCH	api/ceo/{ceo}	ceo.update	App\Http\Controllers\Api\CEOController@update
api,auth:api				
	GET/HEAD	api/ceo/{ceo}	ceo.show	App\Http\Controllers\Api\CEOController@show
api,auth:api				
	POST	api/login		App\Http\Controllers\Api\Auth\AuthController@login
api				
	POST	api/register		App\Http\Controllers\Api\Auth\AuthController@register
api				
	GET/HEAD	api/user		Closure
api,auth:api				
	POST	oauth/authorize	passport.authorizations.approve	Laravel\Passport\Http\Controllers\ApproveAuthorizationController@approve
web,auth				
	GET/HEAD	oauth/authorize	passport.authorizations.authorize	Laravel\Passport\Http\Controllers\AuthorizationController@authorize
web,auth				
	DELETE	oauth/authorize	passport.authorizations.deny	Laravel\Passport\Http\Controllers\DenyAuthorizationController@deny
web,auth				
	GET/HEAD	oauth/clients	passport.clients.index	Laravel\Passport\Http\Controllers\ClientController@forUser
web,auth				
	POST	oauth/clients	passport.clients.store	Laravel\Passport\Http\Controllers\ClientController@store
web,auth				
	DELETE	oauth/clients/{client_id}	passport.clients.destroy	Laravel\Passport\Http\Controllers\ClientController@destroy
web,auth				

This will give you an idea of all the routes for our application.

**NOTE:** Please bear in mind that all the routes inside the `routes/api.php` file will be prefixed with `/api/`, hence you will need to include that when sending HTTP requests to the endpoints created earlier.

## Run the Application

Now, test all the logic implemented so far by running the application with:

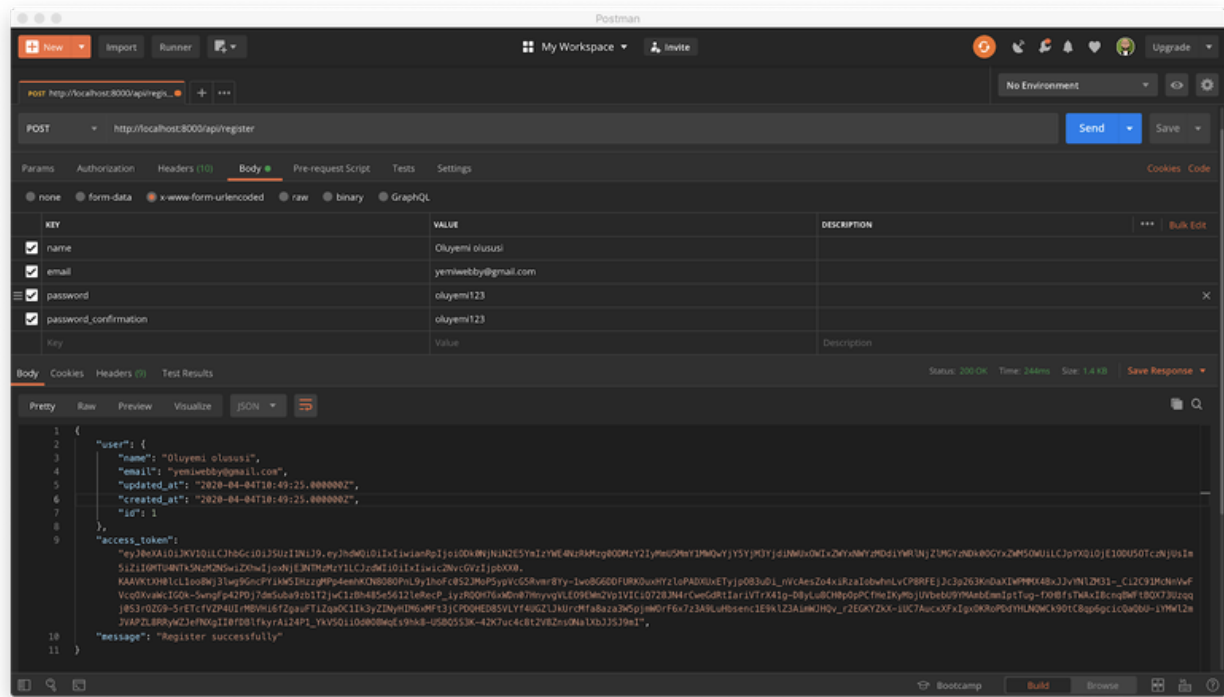
```
1 | $ php artisan serve
```

We will use Postman for the remainder of this tutorial to test the endpoints. Download it [here](#) if you don't have it installed on your machine.

## Register user

To register a user, send a POST HTTP request to this endpoint

<http://localhost:8000/api/register> and input the appropriate details as shown here:



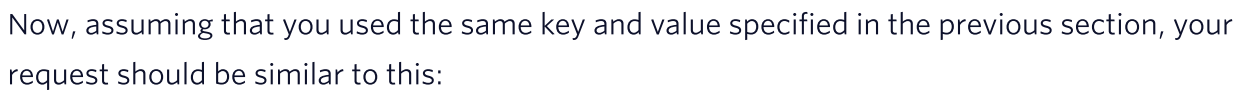
Now, your details might not be similar to this, but here is what the key and value of your requests should look like:

KEY	VALUE
name	John Doe
email	john@me.com
password	password
password_confirmation	password

## Login

Once the registration is successful, you can proceed to

<http://localhost:8000/api/login> and enter your details to get authenticated:



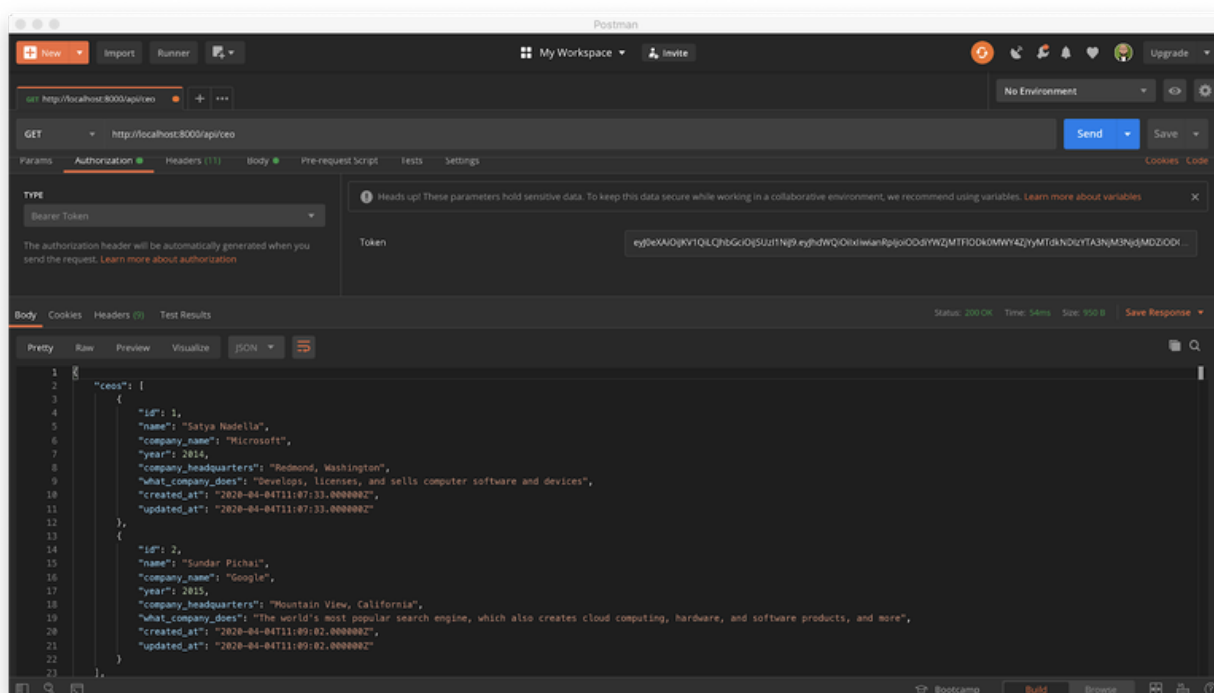
1	KEY	VALUE
2	email	john@me.com
3	password	password

After the login, copy the value of the `access_token` from the response and click on the `Authorization` tab and select `Bearer Token` from the dropdown and paste the value of the `access_token` copied earlier:



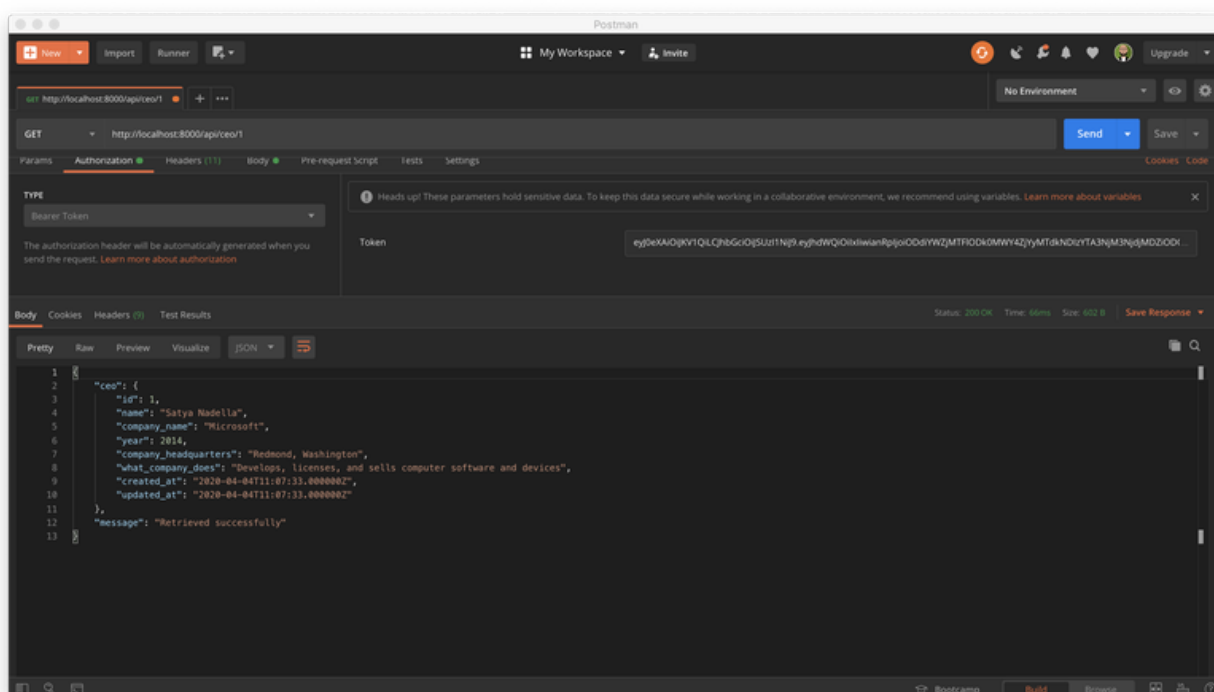
## Fetch the list of CEOs

`http://localhost:8000/api/ceo` as shown below:



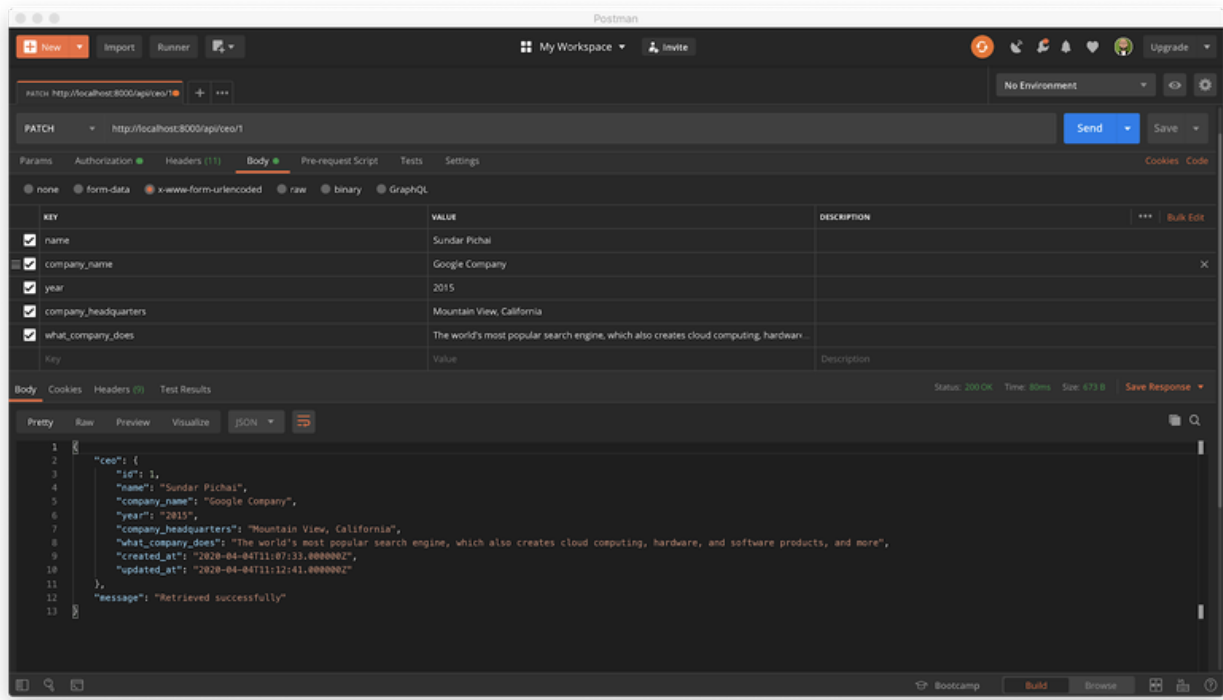
Show CEO

View the details of a particular CEO by sending a `GET` HTTP request to this URL  
`http://localhost:8000/api/ceo/1` :

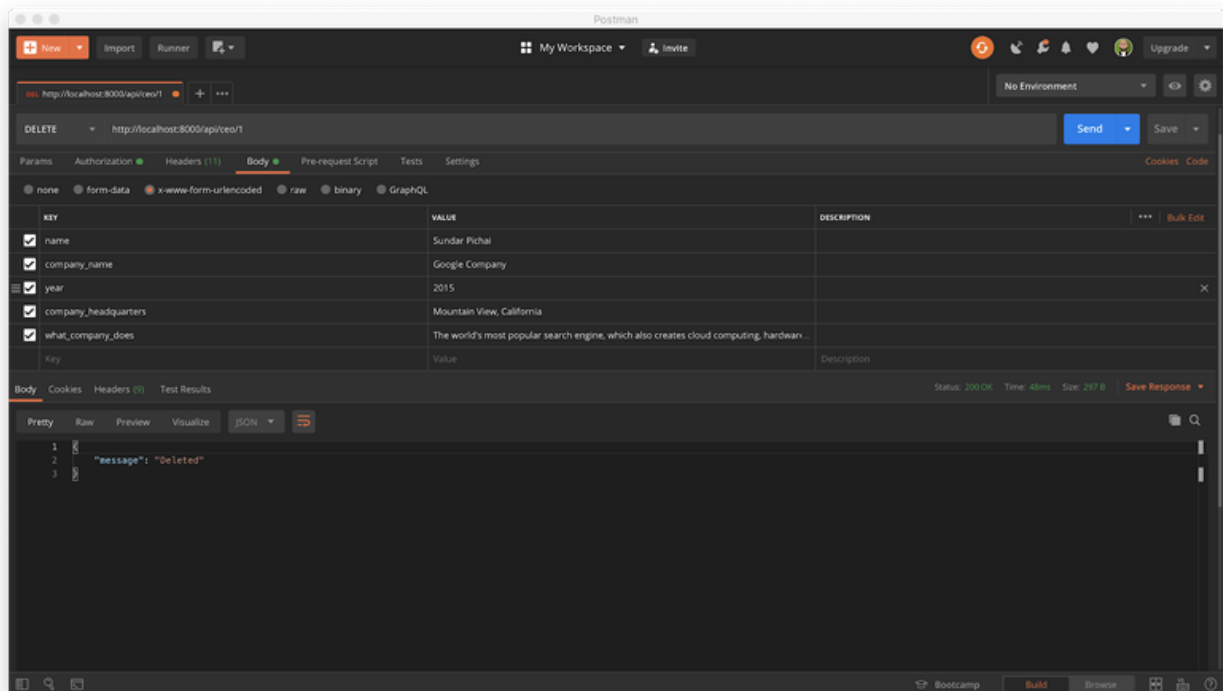


Please note that `1` is used for the endpoint here to specify the `id` of a particular record that needs to be retrieved from the database. You can target any record here using the `id`.

## Edit CEO



## Delete CEO





# Conclusion

In this tutorial, we have learned how to secure any RESTful API built with Laravel using Laravel Passport. The example created in this tutorial covers the basic CRUD (create, read, update and delete) processes required by most applications.

I hope this gives you a solid foundation that can be improved on for your existing project and new ones. Please feel free to explore the codebase of this application by downloading it [here on GitHub](#).

For more information about Laravel and Laravel Passport, don't hesitate to visit the [official documentation](#).

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