



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 22, 2018

U.K. Companies Consider Microchipping Employees

A number of companies in the United Kingdom are considering mass microchipping their employees, a move that is raising concerns about the possible monitoring of U.K. residents. At least two microchip firms — the U.K.'s BioTeq and Sweden's Biohax — have reported that they are working with several major British companies to insert the tiny, hidden information and tracking devices into the bodies of employees.



The rice-grain sized chips are inserted between the thumb and the forefinger of employees, and are used by companies to ensure security at facilities and to store employee data. However, critics note that the chips can also be used to track individuals and to monitor their personal information without permission.

The U.K. *Independent* reported that the use of microchips “has become popular in Sweden, where more than 4,000 people have had chips implanted beneath their skin over the last five years” through Biohax. “A partnership with the Swedish national railway system means people are able to use the Biohax chips as a replacement for paper tickets and plastic travel cards.”

Biohax said that it is presently negotiating with a number of U.K. legal and financial companies, which want the chips implanted in employees to tighten up on security. “These companies have sensitive documents they are dealing with,” Biohax founder Jowan Österlund told the U.K. *Telegraph*. “[The chips] would allow them to set restrictions for whoever.”

Österlund added that “in a company with 200,000 employees, you can offer this as an opt-in. If you have a 15 percent uptake, that is still a huge number of people that won't require a physical ID pass.”

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But critics fear that should companies gain momentum with the chips, they could do away with “opt-in” and require employees to take the chip. “We know workers are already concerned that some employers are using tech to control and micromanage, whittling away their staff's right to privacy,” said Frances O'Grady, general secretary of Britain's Trade Union Congress. “Microchipping would give bosses even more power and control over their workers. There are obvious risks involved, and employers must not brush them aside, or pressure staff into being chipped.”

Representatives of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) also expressed concern. “While technology is changing the way we work, this makes for distinctly uncomfortable reading,” said a statement from the CBI, which represents over 190,000 business throughout the U.K. “Firms should be concentrating on rather more immediate priorities and focusing on engaging their employees.”

In the United States, a Wisconsin company announced in 2017 that it would start microchipping its employees, beginning on a voluntary basis. Three Square Market, a firm that services company break rooms and “micro-markets,” said that at least 50 of its employees in River Falls, Wisconsin, had agreed to be microchipped.



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But while the technology was initially introduced to scan employees into work and to pay for food purchases, Three Square Market's CEO, Todd Westby, said the Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) technology could do more. "We foresee the use of RFID technology to drive everything from making purchases in our office break room market, opening doors, use of copy machines, logging into our office computers, unlocking phones, sharing business cards, storing medical/health information, and used as payment at other RFID terminals," said Westby. "Eventually, this technology will become standardized, allowing you to use this as your passport, public transit, all purchasing opportunities, etc."

Privacy advocate Liz McIntyre, co-author of the book *SpyChips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Purchase and Watch Your Every Move*, warned that while microchipping some individuals — such as children, Alzheimers patients, prisoners, and sex offenders, to name a few — may seem reasonable, "once you start tracking them, you have others who will say, 'See how effective this is? Why not use it in other people?' It becomes commonplace, normal, and people accept it."

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