

GIZMODO

Company Offers Free, Totally Not Creepy Microchip Implants to Employees



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7/24/17 12:12pm • Filed to: DYSTOPIA--NOW! ▾

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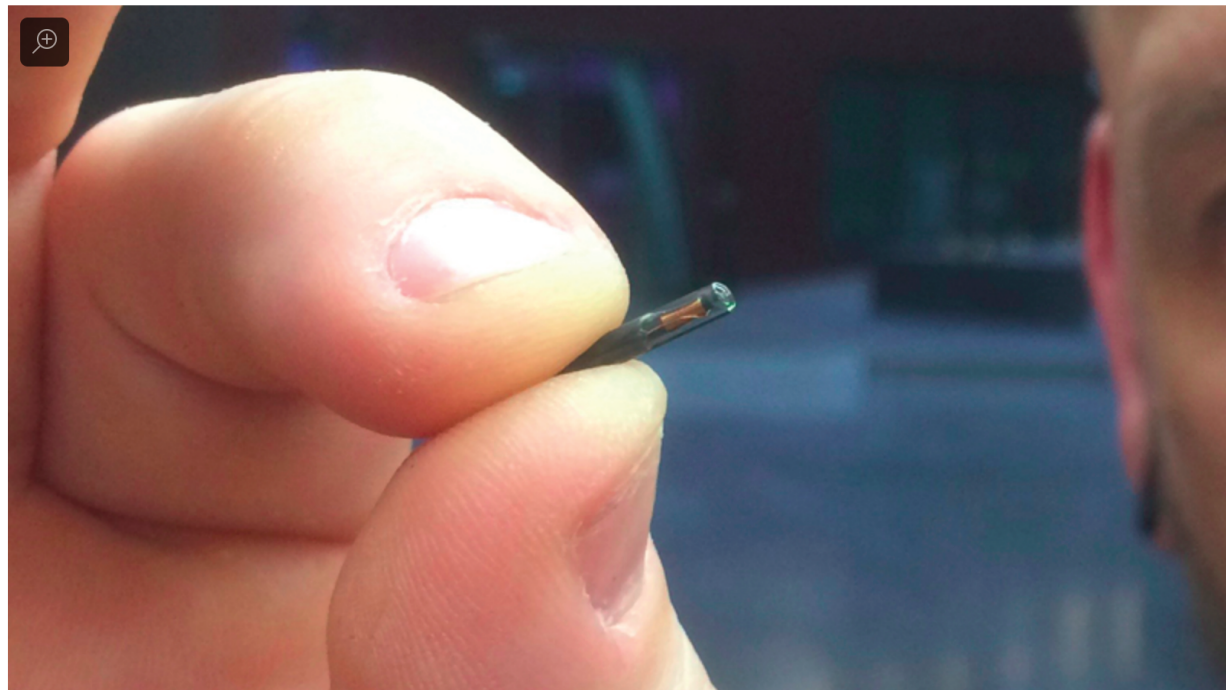


Image: AP

Is that an especially sickly hue in the smog clouds? A faint smell of ammonia in the air? Maybe this morning feels particularly dystopian because Wisconsin-based Three Square Market plans to become the first US company—and one of the first companies period—to offer microchip implants to its employees.

The implants are totally voluntary. As in, the 50+ workers the company “is expecting” to be “[chipped](#)” don’t have to do it. No pressure.

According to a press release from 32M (as the company often stylizes its name), the \$300 procedure will be paid for by the company, while the implantations themselves will be performed by BioHax International, a Swedish company run by Jowan Osterland. 32M CEO Todd Westby sees the rice grain-sized RFID devices—which are stuffed into the webbing between the thumb and index finger—to be used for “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.”

Osterland headed a similar employee “chipping” program [a few months back](#) for fellow Swedish firm Epicenter, a coworking space for start-ups and “[Stockholm’s first digital House of Innovation](#).” Epicenter’s “Chief Disruption Officer” Hannes Sjöblad met Osterland in similar biohacking circles and rolled out voluntary \$120 implants to staff and guests. (Unlike 32M, these were paid out of pocket by those requesting them.)

According to Epicenter’s CEO, Patrick Mesterton, the tiny RFID implants are “primarily [used] to open doors (access to building, offices and conference rooms) but have [been] used for vendor machines (smoothie machine) and printers as well.” All told, he estimates about 200 people have been implanted through Epicenter, with any profit going directly to BioHax.

Security is a major concern both because it presents new opportunities for hackers to steal data, and for companies to snoop on their employees. “[Data] is stored in the microchip and it communicates with a device (reader, mobile phone etc),” Mesterton told Gizmodo over email, “No data is stored with Epicenter or monitored.” It’s unclear, however, if any data is stored with BioHax, or if those setting could be changed at a company’s request.

A start-up coworking space lured by the vague scent of disruptive tech makes a natural pair with RFID implantation. How BioHax came to be involved with 32M, a company that builds software for breakroom “micro markets,” is less clear.

What provisions, if any, are in place to remove or disable the chips when someone is fired, quits, or wishes to unenroll? Is no one worried about elective surgeries becoming an abusable form of employer coercion? What meaningful distinction exists between a “micro market” and “a couple of vending machines”? We’ll update if we hear back from 32M.

The “chipping party” is scheduled for August 1st, and the slow death of worker privacy rights is slated to follow immediately afterwards.

[[KTSP](#) via [Softpedia](#)]