Tech Firm Embeds Microchips In Employees, Predicts We'll All Have One

Paying for purchases with the wave of a hand? That's now reality.

By: Lauren Marciniak

A Wisconsin-based software company says it is the first in the U.S. to start implanting microchips into its employees, and it predicts that being microchipped will be common in the future.

Three Square Market (3SM), which makes software for self-service kiosks and automated "micro-markets," says its employees will be able to log in to their computers, open doors, or buy lunch with a simple wave of their hand.

"Eventually, this technology will become standardized allowing you to use this as your passport, your bank card, all purchasing opportunities, etc.," 3SM CEO Todd Welshay said in a statement.

The US$50 chip is "implanted" beneath the skin between the fingers and forearms, according to BBC News. To access technology on sale for purchase, the wearer just needs to wave their hand above a chip reader, in much the same way that microchip credit cards work.

Out of a total of 85 employees, 3SM expects about 50 to be microchipped when the transition begins on August 1. The company told BBC News. The procedure is not mandatory.

The company has largely dismissed concerns about privacy, saying that the chips can't be used to track people.

"There's no GPS tracking or stuff," Welshay told local news.

As the chip is "passive" technology that just contains data, it can't be hacked, he explained.

The company has partnered with "body hacker" Jowan Osterlund, the CEO of Swedish firm Biohax, which is developing the chip technology.

Biohax has been implanting microchips into employees at various companies operating at Biohax's headquarters in Stockholm for years.

"The biggest benefit I think is convenience," said Patrik Mesterton, co-founder and CEO of Epsilen.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Welshay said this week, Mesterton demonstrated the technology by waving his hand above a chip.

"It's merely replacing a lot of things you have, other communication devices, whether it be credit cards or keys," Mesterton said.

For 3SM, the goal is to get on the ground floor of what he sees as a rapidly expanding new industry.

"The international market is wide open and we believe that the future trajectory of total market share is going to be driven by who captures this area first," company CEO Patrick Nault noted in the statement.

With a file from The Associated Press.