

BBC NEWS

TECHNOLOGY

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Office puts chips under staff's skin

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Want to gain entry to your office, get on a bus, or perhaps buy a sandwich? We're all getting used to swiping a card to do all these things. But at Epicenter, a new hi-tech office block in Sweden, they are trying a different approach - a chip under the skin.

Felicio de Costa, whose company is one of the tenants, arrives at the front door and holds his hand against it to gain entry. Inside he does the same thing to get into the office space he rents, and he can also wave his hand to operate the photocopier.

That's all because he has a tiny RFID (radio-frequency identification) chip, about the size of a grain of rice, implanted in his hand. Soon, others among the 700 people expected to occupy the complex will also be offered the chance to be chipped. Along with access to doors and photocopiers, they're promised further services in the longer run, including the ability to pay in the cafe with a touch of a hand.

On the day of the building's official opening, the developer's chief executive was, himself, chipped live on stage. And I decided that if it was to get to grips with this technology, I had to bite the bullet - and get chipped too.

The whole process is being organised by a Swedish bio-hacking group which was [profiled](#) by my colleague Jane Wakefield recently. One of its members, a rather fearsome looking tattooist, inserted my chip.

First, he massaged the skin between my thumb and index finger and rubbed in some disinfectant. Then he told me to take a deep breath while he inserted the chip. There was a moment of pain - not much worse than any injection - and then he stuck a plaster over my hand.

Before trying my chip out, I wanted to know more about the thinking behind it. Hannes Sjoblad, whose electronic business card is on his own chip and can be accessed with a swipe of a smartphone, has the title chief disruption officer at the development. I asked him whether people really wanted to get this intimate with technology.

"We already interact with technology all the time," he told me. "Today it's a bit messy - we need pin codes and passwords. Wouldn't it be easy to just touch with your hand? That's really intuitive."

When I tested my chip, I found that it was not all that intuitive - I had to twist my hand into an unnatural position to make the photocopier work. And while some of the people around the building were looking forward to being chipped, others were distinctly dubious. "Absolutely not," said one young man when I asked him if he'd sign up. An older woman was more positive about the potential of the technology but saw little point in being chipped just to get through a door.

But Hannes Sjoblad says he and the Swedish Biohacking Group have another objective - preparing us all for the day when others want to chip us. "We want to be able to understand this technology before big corporates and big government come to us and say everyone should get chipped - the tax authority chip, the Google or Facebook chip." Then, he says, we'll all be able to question the way the technology is implemented from a position of much greater knowledge.

I've returned to Britain with a slightly sore hand - and a chip still under my skin which has my contact details on it. Not that useful,

but no doubt more sophisticated chips will soon replace wearable technology like fitness bands or payment devices, and we will get used to being augmented. All sorts of things are possible - whether it becomes culturally acceptable to insert technology beneath our skin is another matter.

[Your comments \(635\)](#)



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Rory Cellan-Jones visits a building where microchipped workers gain entry and use photocopiers by holding up their hands - and trials the tech himself.

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635. Yousureaboutthat

30TH JANUARY 2015 - 23:46

0

It is going to be a pain when you change jobs. :-)

634. JESUSisGOD

30TH JANUARY 2015 - 23:35

This comment was removed because the moderators found it broke the house rules. [Explain](#).

633. David H

30TH JANUARY 2015 - 23:33

0

So what's new..??..

Rory try looking at BBC's own news from 10+ years ago.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3697940.stm>

Principles and application are the same

How did I remember this.. I was working there.

632. jamalagrin

30TH JANUARY 2015 - 23:31

This comment was removed because the moderators found it broke the house rules. [Explain](#).

631. Edith Gibbs

30TH JANUARY 2015 - 23:29

+3

The only news channel I watch is BBC World News, I was totally shocked to see people willing participants of branding like a domesticated animal I then was further dismayed to see it was happening in Sweden. I am in my seventies In my time we considered the Swedish people to be very independent. What has changed? Those being branded or chipped did not seem to think it was an invasion of privacy,

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