

Who needs an implanted microchip when there's an app for that?

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Forget about having to get chipped in today's workplace.

Access technology is playing a huge role in offices, where buildings are more security conscious, and badges and fobs that used to be required

just for entry now also get you up and down the elevator and into the company network.

A Wisconsin firm made a splash in 2017 by announcing a plan to voluntarily implant microchips in employees, not for being tracked, but as a replacement for the company badge.

Now, a Los Angeles startup says it can now offer the same perks of entry without reaching for a badge or access card, and it's app-based.

Openpath is working with Domino's, Bird Scooter and tech firm the Leaf Group to let employees come and go with "mobile credentials."

Meanwhile, Three Square Market, the company that received worldwide headlines in 2017 when it made its microchip announcement has been quiet since. But a Washington state firm that offers chipping is looking to the technology as an alternative to typing in passwords.

Chipping "has always been an uphill swing," says Amal Graafstra, who runs the VivoKey microchip service from Lynden, Washington. "But our sales are going up every month."

In response to the Three Square Market chipping splash, five states responded by outlawing mandatory chipping, including Wisconsin, North Dakota, California, Missouri and Oklahoma. A bill passed the Nevada assembly in the spring but stalled in the Senate.

The L.A. startup, Openpath, scoffs at the notion that chipping makes life easier for employees. "We're trying to reduce friction to access," says James Segil, co-founder of Openpath. "Putting you into minor surgery to get to work just added more friction."

Instead, companies buy his hardware and subscribe to software, and, instead of a company badge, employees set up the app and come and go

by waving their hands at the entryway, without having to pull the phone out of the pocket or purse. OpenPath uses Bluetooth to communicate with the phone.

Eric Roseman, vice-president of innovation for the Lincoln Property Company, which manages commercial real estate nationally, works with Openpath, and says offering mobile credentials "will create a more futureproofed experience for tenants."

For human chipping, Graafstra envisions a future where his implanted chips will enable banking and anything that requires a password.

He's testing a new [chip](#) that works directly with apps. and he's hoping to have it used for payments in 2020.

His firm, VivoKey, is a platform for selling and installing chips and looking to the future. He scoffs at the notion that an app-based alternative could solve access entry. "What if you lose your phone, or it stops working?" he says.

The costs of getting chipped are about \$100 to buy the chip and \$35 to \$75 to have it implanted, he says. He says anyone who specializes in piercings can handle that part.

The trend of microchipping animals to keep track of them has been a success, says the American Veterinary Medical Association, which found that dogs without microchips were returned to their owners 21.9% of the time, compared to 52.2% for chipped dogs.

Patrick McMullan, the president of Three Square Market, said he's looking to develop a "more robust" chip. "The chip being used globally simply isn't capable of doing much," he notes.

Indeed, since the 2017 Three Square Market announcement, only four other organizations have offered microchipping to their workers, and one of them, a Mexican [company](#), did it to keep track of top execs in case they were kidnapped, says Brian Kropp, an analyst for Gartner, "so they would know how to find them."

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