

From: 0 0
Sent: Saturday, June 26, 2004 11:30 PM
To: rfidworkshop
Subject: RFID and Consumers

I am opposed to the use of RFID chips or any technology that can track my movements, habits and information without my consent and/or knowledge. Once an item is purchased, it belongs to me. What I chose to do with it is no one's business but my own.

I am opposed to allowing merchants and companies to discriminate against those that decide to opt out of their loyalty programs with higher prices and reduced customer service. A consumer should not have to choose between a good or service and relinquishing their privacy. I believe the FTC should start by banning this practice as unconstitutional, invasive, and discriminatory.

I oppose funding of RFID technology with my hard-earned dollars in the form of costs being passed on to the consumer. As another poster commented, the way our courts deal with shoplifting is already subsidized by the consumer. However, I do not believe the existing infrastructure will change with the implementation of RFID chips. Too many people depend on said system for their income, and retailers will be hard pressed to eliminate it, preferring instead to keep it in place in case RFID technology does not indeed obliterate every case of shoplifting. RFID will become yet another bloated system subsidized by consumers and tax-payers to benefit corporations.

History has proven time and again that inventive minds will find a way around a challenge, and it is usually the consumer that gets stuck with the undesirable effects of a system that was meant to deter criminals. RFID will not fully protect against theft and it will not make it disappear. Loopholes will be found, ways around the technology will be invented by creative individuals that will make theft of RFID-tagged items a new black market, and the consumer will be stuck with the invasion of privacy while the real thieves find a way around it.

When suppliers, marketers, and manufacturers jump on the RFID wagon, the field of choice will be eliminated for the consumer. Of what use will labels be to the consumer alerting him to an RFID item, if all the items available by manufacturers carry such chips? In the corporate world, the company that stands alone and refuses the use of RFID chips will not survive long. So again, if there are no companies manufacturing RFID-free products, what use will the labels serve? A consumer will be faced with choosing between his need for food and compromising his God-given right to privacy. Will the FTC guarantee my right to choose by mandating Company A to provide an RFID-free product while Company B makes the RFID version? Is this the American way to do business?

I have little to no faith in companies and retailers following any rules or

regulations set in place by the FTC or other governing body regarding this technology. Time and again, it has been shown that databases have been breached, trust has been broken, and mistakes have been made. With the kind of information that RFID technology can garner on any one individual, these events can not be afforded, either on the part of the individual, or the part of the company responsible for storing such information.

Will the FTC set in place a legal channel for injured parties to sue those companies that have breached our trust, or have otherwise compromised our private information, without costing us our life's savings? Who will subsidize this new system? The corporations or the tax-payer? What will be the parameters for proving fault, establishing, and defining this breach of trust? Who will pay the consumer for his time, effort, and anguish in fighting to protect or correct the private information held by a corporation?

Who will own my private information?

Will the small, hand-held RFID readers I've read about be licensed or monitored in some way to protect the privacy of my home from a potential burglar if I can't deactivate the RFID chips upon purchase? Would this guarantee my safety? (I doubt it).

And if I can deactivate the RFID chip at the point of sale, is there really a need for it, considering the bar-code technology already in place was touted as revolutionary in preventing shoplifting and tracking inventory when it first appeared? Why fix what isn't really broken? Unless of course, the real reason behind the RFID is to track shopper movement within a store in a much more invasive way, and record shopping habits and expenses and link the information much more efficiently to names, debit and credit card numbers, and other personal identifiable information for the purposes of sending spam and junk email under the guise of a 'more personalized' shopping experience.

I believe the FTC has to take a stand on the issues of civilian privacy and information before tackling RFID and allowing corporate business to experiment with this technology on the American people. The FTC needs to define its role in protecting our rights to our personal information. What will be allowable, by law, to be collected on individuals by corporations in order to increase their marketing strategies? Where will the government, corporations, and individuals draw the line?

Already, identity theft is pandemic. The flow of personal and financial information has increased dramatically and will continue to do so. I shudder to think of the repercussions of adding yet more personal and private information to the profiles of Americans. With talk of RFID networks and 'smart' houses in the foreseeable future, it will only be a matter of time before a complete profile of any individual will be available to any one with a chip reader. It is imperative that these questions be shared and answered with the American public before such technology is used en masse in this country.

Sincerely,
A Concerned Consumer

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