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If you live in an apartment complex or work in a sleek corporate building, you're probably familiar with keycards and keyfobs. These plastic cards and tags use RFID technology to give access to specific rooms, buildings and gates. Each tag also has a unique ID that can be used to track entry and exit from restricted areas.

For the past decade, phones have been able to do something similar with NFC (which is a subset of RFID technology). Digital House Keys and Digital Car Keys can unlock houses and cars, but they require specific locks and cars to work.

Do you see where I'm going with this? Can't our phones replace the generic key fobs and key cards we use to get into places?

The question occurred to me as I was switching from my iPhone 12 to my Samsung S24+ last week. You see, of the many digital things I had to transfer, I also had to transfer the small physical key fob that was superglued to the back of my iPhone.

For context, I did this to avoid needing to carry keys at all. I use an August lock on the door of my actual apartment, but there are 2 other doors I have to get through before that and those doors need keyfobs. It would be absolutely amazing if I didn't have to superglue a keyfob to the back of my phone.

The back of my phone is prime real-estate. There's a popsocket on there (a godsend for large phones), a square metallic plate (for my magnetic car mount), some small cute stickers and the keyfob for my apartment complex. It's too much, really.

There are many great benefits from storing generic RFID tags on our phones. It's convenient, it's secure, it's harder to lose. They could be added or removed as part of an enterprise policy for work. Did I also mention the absolute win in terms of environmental impact? Most of these tags are made out of plastic!

My intuition tells me that phones *should* be able to incorporate this technology fairly easily at this point in time.

Of course, there can be regulatory and technical reasons for why this is infeasible. If anyone knows more about that, I'm happy to hear about it. So far, it just seems like a solid win on all counts and I would love to see it on the next iPhone or Android device that comes out. I would be sorely tempted to buy that device for this feature alone.