Amazon looks to make shoplifting legal with Amazon Go

by MATTHEW HUGHES — 35 minutes ago in MONEY

There's a term used to describe people who walk into a store, help themselves to a sandwich or a cupcake, and then promptly walk out: Shoplifters. But maybe not for much longer. Amazon just lifted the lid on its new Amazon Go technology, which looks to fundamentally transform the retail world.

Here's how it works. You enter a store using Amazon's propriety technology and flash your personal QR code to a reader. Then, you just pick up what you want and walk out. No dealing with infuriating self-checkout machines or cashiers. The money is automatically taken from a nominated credit or debit card. It's the ultimate in grab-and-go retail convenience.

Amazon Go is powered by a combination of computer vision, sensors and machine learning, packaged up into something the company calls "Just Walk Out technology."

This means that it can determine whenever you pick something up and put it into your cart. It can also tell when you put something back.

Right now, Amazon Go is currently being trialled in a brand new, 1,800 square-foot supermarket in Downtown Seattle, found on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Blanchard Street. It's currently only open to Amazon employees involved in the trial, but the company expects to open it to the public by 2017.

Amazon says that the supermarket will sell ready-to-eat meals and snacks prepared by on-site chefs or local bakeries. It will also sell essentials like bread and milk, as well as well-known brands, and high-end cheese and chocolate.

Also on offer will be special culinary kits created by Amazon, which will allow you to create an impressive meal for two in just thirty minutes.

So, yes. This is pretty exciting stuff. It means that you'll no longer spend your lunch hours waiting to pay for the tuna mayo sandwich you just picked up. I imagine that the tech will come in handy at airports and train stations, where people are often pressed for time.

But we should also dampen our enthusiasm with the knowledge that this technology has the potential to put thousands of people out of work. Yes, on a technological level, it's rather cool. But there's a human consequence to advancements like this.

Amazon Go