As a workplace leader, supervising employees who are working remotely may be a new experience for you. You may feel unsure about how best to support your employees, how to communicate effectively with reduced in-person conversations, and how to manage your team's work during these unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Honest, consistent and compassionate leadership supports your team in the short-term and builds resilience for the long-term. Here are some tips to navigate the way forward:

- **Expect that people will have a range of reactions** to the transition to remote working. Some people may welcome it and adapt quickly while others may have a harder time adjusting. People can also have different reactions at different times. Let your team know that this is normal, offer support where you can and give people space and time to adjust.

- **Focus on keeping employees engaged** rather than trying to stick to business as usual. We are collectively developing a temporary "new normal" and this will shift and change. Work provides a sense of purpose, safety and belonging for many people. Focusing on keeping your team engaged rather than holding rigid ideas about how things "should" be done will help everyone adapt.

- **Provide regular updates to your team** about changes that are happening with work. You don't need to have all the answers but remember the communication basics: Share what you know and share what you don't know. Let your team know when you expect to have more information.

- **Develop shared expectations** for how you'll work together. For example, consider having each team member check in/out via Teams at the start/end of each day. Depending on their circumstances, different people may be working at different times than they normally would. Emphasize that this is not about keeping track of time but it is about having transparent communication to maintain trust, stay engaged and care for each other.

- **Set up a dedicated Teams chat** for your workgroup or project group. This will facilitate easier communication by providing a central place for ongoing conversations that are of a more casual nature than email strings. Encourage your team to change their "status" in Teams (i.e. available, busy, do not disturb, be right back, etc.) and log out of Teams when they aren't working so that everyone knows their availability. Remember not to share sensitive or confidential documents or information over Teams.

- **Plan times when you connect by phone or Teams video/audio** so that there are set times when the group can come together to ask questions, share information and connect with each other "face-to-face." Recognize that the video feature can feel uncomfortable for some people. Allow people to make their own choices around video but encourage them to use it since seeing others and being seen goes a long way towards mitigating feelings of isolation. Allow time for small chat during the meeting so people feel connected.

- **Assess your priorities** for your team to accomplish in the coming weeks and determine what is realistic. Let your team know what to prioritize, what to postpone for later and why. Expect that these priorities may change and communicate this to your team.

- **If possible, plan for one-to-one times** with each team member that are longer when the employee first begins to work remotely. This will allow for clarity of communication and increased understanding of expectations and work goals.

- **Encourage people to set daily goals** that are aligned with the priorities you have agreed upon. In these unusual circumstances, it will help for people to have smaller, shorter-term goals where they get a sense of accomplishment and keep work moving forward.

- **Reassess your expectations and priorities periodically**. Ask for feedback from your team. What's working? What could be done differently? What do they see as the priorities? With so much change going on, it is important to allow for flexibility in responding to ever-evolving circumstances.

- **Check for understanding.** Since much of communication is non-verbal, moving to email, online or phone as the primary forms of communication leaves more room for misinterpretation. Ask everyone on your team (including yourself) to paraphrase what they hear and encourage people to ask clarifying questions.

- **Have impromptu phone or Teams calls** when needed. Sometimes a quick 5-minute audio or video chat can provide clarity that keeps people on track. An employee may feel awkward emailing or messaging a question but they can ask verbally over a short phone/Teams call.

- **Make use of shared drives and/or SharePoint** to save documents so that everyone has access to the information. Especially if employees are working at varied times, this ensures that everyone has access to the information they need when they need it.

- **Celebrate small successes**. We all need encouragement and need to know that our work is making a difference. Rather than focusing on everything that isn't getting done during this time, look for the small wins of (or highlight the) things that are getting done.

- **Recognize that everyone is under stress** and that each of us will respond differently to these changes. Practice good self-care for yourself and encourage your team to do the same. Provide resources to support good mental health such as Camosun's Resiliency Resources page.