Pharmaceutical product demand is as uncertain as any customer market, with the added challenge of extremely high material costs and a short shelf life. Companies like Eisai struggle to manage sufficient product availability without wasting materials. The human health company’s mission to have their first thought to patients and their families creates an added challenge, in particular their commitment to ‘uninterrupted supply of quality product’.

In 2011, the Japanese tsunami was one of several major, unplanned events that caused many production organizations to fall well short of customer needs over the subsequent months. Natural catastrophes are not part of the typical planning cycle. Fortunately, Eisai had built up enough supply to meet industry needs, but it came with a high cost and future supply might not be as fortunate.

In order to build protection against volatile events and keep their commitment to their customers, Eisai needed a creative new approach to the management of resources and supply chain process. A partnership was created with NC State Executive Education to develop and deliver a custom program - Optimization of the Global Planning Process - that would provide training on supply chain analysis. This new capability together with JDA software would provide Eisai planners the ability to make strategic decisions around supply stock management.

The program delivery, occurring just after the Japanese Tsunami, sought a balanced approach to stock management and customer service, as well as a creative solution to global supply. The program improved Eisai’s insight and understanding on how to seek cost reductions without putting at risk the company’s commitment to serving their customers.