



Imprisoned drug dealers reported that they aimed to sell mainly to regular customers and employed tactics to secure a stable customer base, including offering discounts, providing credit and even occasionally, offering ‘freebies’ or ‘extras’ to regular customers

**suppliers
drug dealing
tactics**
customer service

This area of work in ALICE RAP draws on interviews with 135 male drug dealers in prison in Italy, Slovenia and Germany. The aim of this ALICE RAP research was to improve understanding of how dealers in cocaine and heroin entered the market, organised their dealing operations and managed suppliers, customers, risks, profits and costs. Interviewees were in prison at the time of the interview, having been convicted of at least one drug offence related to distribution or sale of heroin or cocaine.

Most dealers in our three samples reported having regular suppliers. Analysis of the interviews indicates that supply arrangements varied according to whether the interviewee was an independent dealer or worked as part of an organisation, as well as whether they were high or low quantity sellers. Dealers’ relationships with their customers were described as revolving around trust and reputation. Tactics dealers’ described using to maintain their customer base included being reliable and providing a quality product. A few quotations illustrate these points.

“They [customers] would always come back because the product was good.” (I60)

“Customers are people you know, if there are any problems they will come back”. I35

“New drug is not always the same. My supplier always told me if the drug was not ok. And I have always told my customers about it and I let them to try it before they bought it.”S29

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Tzvetkova, M., Pardal, M., Rena, A., Disley, E., Liquori, A., & Libianchi, S. (2014): *Dealing in cocaine and heroin in Italy: business strategies and operations.* In: Anderson, P., Bühringer, G. & Colom, J. eds. [Reframing addiction: policies, processes and pressures.](#) The ALICE RAP project. ISBN: 978-84-697-1647-2