SEO STRATEGIST INTERVIEW PREP

The Tool Stack: Semrush, Ahrefs, Screaming Frog & Birdeye

A deep-dive reference guide to the four platforms named in the job description

Why This Section of the JD Matters

The job description names four specific tools: Semrush, Ahrefs, Screaming Frog SEO Spider, and Birdeye. You aren't expected to walk in as a power user of all four — the JD frames the requirement as "knowledge of SEO tools and platforms such as" these, alongside the broader qualification of being an "eager learner" across digital order management and reporting platforms.

What matters for the interview is being able to say, credibly, what each tool is for, how they differ from one another, and where each would fit into the day-to-day work this role actually does: monitoring partner fulfillment, troubleshooting technical access issues, and interpreting strategy documents and performance reports for Sales Specialists.

The Four Tools, One at a Time

Semrush **All-in-one SEO platform**

The broadest of the four — one platform covering most of the SEO workflow.

Semrush is a subscription SEO suite covering keyword research, backlink analysis, rank tracking, content optimization, and local SEO tracking in a single platform. Its technical site-audit module runs over 140 automated checks and produces a site health score, which industry comparisons rate as more complete than Screaming Frog's narrower crawling focus.

Semrush is generally positioned as the strongest choice for marketing teams and agencies that want one platform covering strategy, competitive research, and reporting, rather than assembling several specialized tools. Recent coverage also notes Semrush has launched an MCP (Model Context Protocol) server, letting AI agents query its data through natural language — directly relevant to the AI-search shift this role is hired to navigate.

Why it's on this JD: it's the platform most likely used to guide overall SEO strategy and produce the performance reports and strategy documents you'd be interpreting for Sales Specialists.

Ahrefs **Backlink & competitive research platform**

Semrush's closest competitor — narrower, but deeper on links.

Ahrefs is a cloud-based crawler and backlink intelligence platform. It's widely considered the stronger tool specifically for backlink analysis, competitive research, and keyword/content research — scanning a site for toxic backlinks, orphan pages, and internal linking gaps alongside its own technical crawl.

Industry comparisons frame the Semrush-vs-Ahrefs choice as breadth vs. depth: Semrush offers more all-in-one workflow coverage, while Ahrefs goes deeper specifically on links and competitive content research. In practice, many SEO teams and agencies license both rather than choosing one.

Why it's on this JD: it's the tool most associated with the competitive and backlink side of a partner's SEO strategy — relevant when interpreting a digital partner's strategy documents or diagnosing why a client's campaign underperforms a competitor's.

Screaming Frog SEO Spider **Technical site crawler**

A desktop tool with one specific job: crawl a site the way a search engine would.

Screaming Frog is a desktop-based crawler that scans a website the way a search engine bot does, surfacing broken links, redirect chains, duplicate content, and missing or malformed meta descriptions and structured data. The free tier crawls up to 500 URLs; the paid license (roughly £259/year) removes that cap and adds JavaScript crawling, Google API integrations, and structured-data analysis.

Where Semrush and Ahrefs combine crawling with strategic and competitive features, Screaming Frog does one thing — technical crawling — very thoroughly, which is why many teams pair it with Semrush or Ahrefs rather than treating it as a replacement for either. It's frequently the go-to tool for site migrations, rebrands, or feature rollouts, where a full technical audit is time-critical.

Why it's on this JD: this is the tool most directly tied to the JD's "troubleshoot technical issues that could delay a campaign launch" duty — a Screaming Frog crawl is how you'd actually find a broken CMS connection, a blocked resource, or a malformed redirect before it becomes a client-facing delay.

Birdeye **Reputation & local-presence management platform**

The odd one out — not a crawler or keyword tool, but a review and local-listings platform.

Birdeye is different in kind from the other three: it's a reputation-management and digital customer-experience platform built for local and multi-location brands, not a keyword or crawling tool. Its core functions are automating review requests, aggregating and monitoring reviews from over 150 external platforms, managing business listings across 50+ directories, and centralizing responses to reviews (including AI-generated draft responses).

Birdeye's relevance to SEO specifically is that review volume, recency, ratings, and response rates are direct local-search ranking signals — Google alone accounts for the large majority of all online reviews, so a business's review profile on Google feeds both traditional local search rankings and how AI-driven search summarizes and recommends a business. Birdeye's own materials frame this as "SEO reputation management": AI search engines are described as prioritizing brands with consistent, well-managed reputation signals across locations.

Why it's on this JD: This position serves local television markets and local-business advertising clients — Birdeye is the tool that would matter most for a client whose SEO problem is really a local-listings or review-management problem, which is a very plausible scenario for local broadcast-adjacent clients.

How the Four Fit Together

- **Strategy & competitive layer: Semrush and Ahrefs — keyword research, backlink analysis, rank tracking, and the reports a Sales Specialist would actually see.**
- Technical layer: Screaming Frog — crawls the site itself to catch the access and structural issues that could delay or break a campaign.

- Local reputation layer: Birdeye — reviews and listings, which increasingly double as ranking and AI-citation signals for local and multi-location clients.
- A useful frame for the interview: these four tools map to three different jobs (strategy, technical audit, local reputation) rather than being four versions of the same thing — naming that distinction shows you understand the landscape structurally, not just as a list of brand names.

Bridging the Experience Gap Honestly

Per the prep brief's honest-gaps section, you don't have direct hands-on time in any of these four platforms yet. The strongest way to handle that in an interview is the same pattern that's worked for you before: name the gap plainly, then point to the track record that makes it a fast-closing one rather than a real risk.

- You've repeatedly ramped up on unfamiliar, complex platforms on the job — WideOrbit Traffic, Strata, BluHorn, multiple no-code inventory databases — often becoming the person who solved other people's problems in those tools, not just a user of them.
- Before the interview, spend a few hours in the free tiers: Semrush and Ahrefs both offer limited free/trial access, and Screaming Frog's free tier alone covers a real 500-URL crawl — enough to speak concretely if asked what you noticed.
- If asked directly "have you used these tools," answer honestly — no — and pivot immediately to the pattern above, rather than overstating familiarity.

Sources for Further Reading

Paraphrased and summarized above; consult these directly for full detail, current pricing, or feature comparisons.

- Screaming Frog vs. Semrush: Using One, Both, or Something Else? — Search Atlas — https://searchatlas.com/blog/screaming-frog-vs-semrush/
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- Best SEO Tools 2026: 12 Tested, 4 Track AI Search — TECHSY — https://techsy.io/en/blog/best-seo-tools-2026
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- Compare Ahrefs vs Screaming Frog SEO Spider 2026 — Capterra — https://www.capterra.com/compare/176340-185765/Ahrefs-vs-Screaming-Frog-SEO-Spider
- Review Management Guide (2026): Strategies & Tools — Birdeye — https://birdeye.com/blog/review-management/
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- Birdeye Review 2026: Pricing, Features, Pros & Cons — Research.com — https://research.com/software/reviews/birdeye-review