

The AgVocate
Taking Off with Nuffield International
Jodie Redcliffe & Maycon Santos
S02E04 Transcript

[The AgVocate theme starts]

Voice Over - Welcome to The AgVocate. The podcast that advocates for agriculture. I'm your host **Simon Pampena**.

With this series of podcasts we'll be telling stories from the people of this ever-growing community, be it industry leaders or those just starting out, because each and every one of them shares a passion for Ag and are doing their part in feeding a hungry planet.

[The AgVocate theme ends]

Voice Over - Nuffield International is an agricultural scholarship program like no other. *Its* scholars come from all parts of the industry and its *campus* spans the globe.

Jodie - Hi my name is Jodie and I'm a 2013 Nuffield scholar.

Voice Over - **Jodie Redcliffe** is a former Nuffield scholar and a passionate AgVocate. She is someone who has undertaken this unique program and embarked on her own journey of discovery to learn more about the ag industry and her place in it.

Jodie is now the head of the Australian chapter of the organisation as well as interim CEO of Nuffield International - all while running her own poultry farm with her husband in Queensland Australia.

Jodie - Thank you - I'm busy [laughter]

Voice Over - People familiar with the Youth Ag Summit know how life-changing it is - being flown internationally to meet young change-makers from all over the world. Well, the Nuffield program takes that one step further - in fact several steps further.

[Musics starts]

Jodie - The Nuffield program is 16 weeks of international travel over about a period of 12 or 18 months or so. Some of that is set by Nuffield so there's an introductory conference over 10 days or so and then a six-week period where you go on what's called a Global Focus Program. And the Global Focus Program will take you to about six countries in six weeks and then the rest of your study is for you to do your [own] personal travel and you can choose where you want to go and how you want to do that.

Voice Over - Just imagine - 4 months of international travel *starting* with 6 countries in just 6 weeks...

[SFX - jet airline passing overhead]

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[Music starts]

For the past 73 years Nuffield scholars have been doing just that - traveling the world to get a global understanding of agriculture. Each scholar chooses one aspect of their industry to research and then visits vastly different regions and societies to get a holistic view on their chosen topic. And since you don't really understand something until you have to explain it to someone else, scholars then write up a 10,000 word report on their findings to share with other members in the industry. And at the end of this process not only have scholars gained invaluable knowledge, they've learnt how to communicate that knowledge and in so doing develop their own capacity as a future leader in ag.

[Music ends]

Jodie is one such ag leader who has emerged from the Nuffield program. She oversaw the selection process for the 2020 batch of international scholars and had coordinated for those scholars to come together in Brisbane Australia at the start of March this year. Along with a large contingent of industry leaders, primary producers, friends and family they were there to partake in the CSC - the Contemporary Scholars Conference - the event that kicks off the scholarship program for the Nuffield scholars each year.

Jodie - We were raring to go and having a great time.

Voice Over - They were gathered to talk about opportunities in the world of ag, share ideas and spark debate, all in preparation for their globetrotting journeys of discovery... but they were also there to discuss the challenges facing global agriculture and how to stay flexible in a rapidly changing world. Topics that were about to become very real...

[News theme starts]

Newsreader - Good evening - as the novel coronavirus spreads to more countries the global infection rate has surpassed 150,000 worldwide. New York City has declared a State of Emergency, Italy and Spain are in lockdown, and the US has banned all flights from Europe. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has announced they will close their border this weekend and Australia is set to follow suit by the end of next week.

[News theme ends]

Jodie - When the coronavirus crisis was starting to happen around us we were all very pragmatic and realistic people used to dealing with some really bad situations every single day. Your decision is the best that you can make at the time that you make it and then you move on. I don't know if that's unique to farming but that's definitely what I see in farmers and that's what I saw with the COVID-19 situation and our conference.

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Voice Over - Months of careful preparation were suddenly thrown into chaos. The arrival of a worldwide health emergency meant decisions needed to be made quickly and actions taken decisively. But Jodie and her team did an amazing job in unprecedented circumstances. In a very short period of time they assessed what they could keep in schedule and what needed to go. It wasn't easy.

Jodie - There was a moment there where I thought... is it all going to unravel? Are we going to lose all our scholars over the next couple of days because they're all going to think 'I need to get home, I'm a long way from home, and I don't know what's going to happen'. But it didn't - that didn't happen at all. And so we had some UK scholars and Kiwis that left over the first couple of days and then we were business as usual. We had some fantastic speakers over those few days and, and Maycon - wow!

Voice Over - Still on the conference schedule was **Maycon Santos** - a young man who had travelled all the way from Brazil via the US to talk about a small but important smartphone app he was working on.

Maycon was there as an ambassador for the Youth Ag Summit, chosen by organisers and his fellow delegates to represent the entire YAS community at the CSC.

And on one afternoon near the end of the conference the entire delegation gathered to listen to him speak.

[Audience applause]

Maycon - I want you all to imagine something.

I want you to imagine that you just woke up and you're hungry.

[Music starts]

Now imagine that you get up and you go towards the kitchen and you see your pantry is there... but it's empty. You try the fridge but there's no food there either.

Now, I want you to imagine that you haven't eaten anything since the day before and you have to go to school.

Imagine the feeling in your stomach. You know that feeling when you're tired and you cannot concentrate and you're hungry?

Just imagine that.

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[Music ends]

Voice Over - The whole audience was enthralled. This young change-maker spoke to a room full of change-makers about the plight of under-resourced school kids in his community and what he was doing to stop it. He spoke calmly and passionately about a smartphone app he had designed to bring his community together and solve the problem of hunger collectively.

While Maycon had already met a bunch of people at this conference, after this speech everyone knew who he was and recognised the impact he was going to make in the world.

Jodie - When we were planning the CSC we were aware of Maycon quite early and I was really excited because Nuffield is very inclusive in my eyes and Maycon then actually got in touch with me you know, we'd had a couple of emails and then he said 'Would it be appropriate if we did a Zoom call and I can tell you about my background?' And that was absolutely such a positive and also proactive thing to do on his behalf - as a 21 year old - to say 'hey you know, you don't know much about me let's have a conversation' which we did. And even in a Zoom conference which sometimes you know, they're not fantastic - you could feel his warmth and his ability to tell a great story, and he tells a great story about his own life because he's had an amazing - *an amazing* life so far.

[Music starts - Maycon's theme]

Maycon - I'm from a very small town in the Brazilian countryside. The town is called Janaúba. I come from a low-income family so my family didn't have like, a lot of resources. Growing up it was a little bit hard - I had to start working [at] an early age. I remember I was 11 years old and I was already collecting cardboard and aluminium because these were my family's primary sources of income.

Voice Over - Despite high rates of economic growth over the past two decades Brazil is still dealing with the problem of income inequality that has been going on for much much longer. Maycon shared an upbringing with millions of other Brazilians - struggling to get by with very little money or resources. It's a lot of pressure for a kid to deal with.

Maycon - Part of my life until like, 14 years old, I wasn't really engaged at school just because I had a really hard time managing education and work at the same time. When I went to high school I decided that I wanted to achieve bigger things - you know like, go beyond my reality. Since my school was a public school, the Brazilian educational system ranks 75th out of 80 countries - pretty bad. So we didn't have a lot of extra curricular opportunities, research opportunities, so I had to create my own things. I have a friend that told me one day it looks like I created dreams out of nowhere.

[Music ends]

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Voice Over - Once Maycon arrived at high school he started to think differently. The hardships he and his family had endured for so many years had given him a desire for change. But not just change for himself. Maycon wanted to bring change to his whole community.

Maycon - So [my] freshman year of high school I founded a school radio station because I wanted people to start applying for opportunities that were beyond our academic setting. *{radio station bumper}* So I started the radio station advertising educational opportunities for 1,500 students in my school and people started applying to exchange programs and leadership programs. I remember one popular program was the Youth Parliament where the students could act like politicians working to make policies that could solve significant challenges in their hometowns and that was a statewide program.

Voice Over - The remarkable thing about what Maycon achieved at such a young age was the mind-shift he brought about at his local high school. By making people aware of opportunities and then encouraging them to apply, his fellow students were learning about the power of self-knowledge and self-determination. Maycon was mentoring people to find and understand their own talents. And that's huge. Because organisers of large events and programs all want people with the right talents to match the opportunities they're offering.

Jodie - Yeah - that's like when we do the application process for Nuffield scholars you don't be too prescriptive because what you're searching for is the person that can talk with passion about their agriculture or their topic that they're interested in because it's that something that you see in the person that means you know they're going to be a good communicator, you know they're going to be a good learner, which isn't necessarily what's on paper.

Maycon - The impact of that radio station in my school was so significant that doors opened for me. [Music starts] People were starting to recognise my participation [in] this project. My mind was just like, amazed by all the people I met and all the experiences I had that I started to like, want more... even more. I decided to apply to the English Immersion Program that is organised by the US embassy. They advertised widely in public schools in Brazil.

Voice Over - And the total number of people who applied from a cohort of 1500 students?

Maycon - I was the only one because they needed English.

Voice Over - In a country where only 5% of the population can speak English fluently, Maycon's skills with the language are remarkable.

Jodie - I know - his English is so good... [laughs] incredible.

Voice Over - But what's even more extraordinary is the way he became fluent.

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Maycon - I literally like, wrote down like, the 300 most used words in English and I also looked for the meaning and for the pronunciation on [the] internet. And that helped me build vocabulary for the interviews.

Voice Over - And when there was a scarcity of native English speakers to practice with, Maycon got creative!

Maycon - I started studying using YouTube videos. I have this guilty pleasure of like, watching um... The Voice videos on YouTube just to [laughs] just to like, get the pronunciation of the words correctly.

[Music starts - reminiscent of The Voice theme]

The Voice Singer - We're singing in Eng-lish!

[Music ends]

Maycon - Watching these videos I started to gain more proficiency in English and more confidence in my English abilities so I decided to apply to study in the US.

Voice Over - Through that application process Maycon ended up being offered a full scholarship at Tufts University in Massachusetts USA... which he only got because he was the smartest student at his high school... right?

Maycon - Oh no, I wasn't the smartest [student] at school at all. I have friends that I tell them like, 'you guys could be at any university in the world like, literally any university' but what made a difference was English language proficiency because the smartest people in my school just didn't have the resources or the initiative to start learning English.

Voice Over - While intelligence is incredibly important it's initiative that's making the difference in how Maycon's life is turning out. Maycon's initiative is creating connections with others that has opened the world up to him. And if his friends want to follow in his *footsteps* then their first *step* should be to speak to Maycon. And while that seems obvious to point out it's actually super-important. Maycon is connected to a network of people that efficiently shares information about opportunities and learnings. He is someone who excels in peer-to-peer communication which is key to the success of any professional network.

Jodie - Part of the beauty of our program is that it is essentially still farmer-to-farmer interaction. So, when a Nuffield Scholar does a project it's a farmer that can present information written in a way that makes sense to another farmer. And then a very important other part of that is that we always do a presentation of those findings so [to develop] that ability to verbally communicate. It's one of the things we help our scholars with. Not everybody can - you know - get up and talk and for some people it's their worst - *their worst* nightmare is getting up and

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talking in front of people but the strength of Nuffield is our network and the network only works if you can disseminate information amongst people and go wow - here's something I didn't know - this person should talk to this person that I know and that's how these interactions are built.

[SFX - Chicken sounds start]

Voice Over - The project Jodie chose to study for her Nuffield journey was around the different types of material used to cover the floors of chicken houses around the world. Straw and hay are the traditional materials that come to mind when thinking about what's on the floor of a chicken house but Jodie wanted to explore alternatives - specifically rice hulls. Now, that might sound very niche but it is typical of the subject areas chosen by scholars for very practical reasons.

Jodie - It's interesting to you and your farming business but also it's also going to be something that's applicable to [the] wider industry that you can come back home and share through a report and through presentations.

[SFX - Chicken sounds end]

Voice Over - But Jodie's didn't end up sticking this idea. Her plan to research something production focussed was soon put aside for a much bigger problem.

[Music starts]

On the surface her original topic was about the use of a particular input into her farming business but in the wider context it was about finding the best farming practices to produce the highest quality and most affordable product for her end consumers. And through meeting farmers around the world Jodie would soon learn about the problems farmers had communicating with those end consumers.

Jodie - Through the course of my Nuffield Global Focus Program I was blown away by the fact that everywhere we went from you know, subsistence farmers in India to huge grain wheat-belt farms in the US, that everyone had similar problems. Everyone complained that farmers were not appreciated, that people didn't understand agriculture, [that] nobody was in inverted commas 'telling our story'. So that's what I did my report on and I think - I actually, I have this postcard that sits on my desk that's a picture of a woman in a long skirt and an apron throwing seed out to chickens on the ground and I keep that there and I used that in my presentation when I did my Nuffield Scholarship because that is not modern farming yet that's a picture of farming that people have - they have this idyllic view. But a modern farmer is more likely to be in their office working on an Excel spreadsheet than they are out on a tractor.

[Music ends]

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Voice Over - Uncovering deeper problems is the task of any effective change-maker and travel is a great way to facilitate that process. While Maycon was studying in the US he was thinking about how he could help the lives of people in the community he came from. And with a clarity that comes when you're far from home he started to map out the problem of hunger in the high school he attended. His research would prove to be pivotal in the next stage of his journey.

[Music starts]

Maycon - I identified a big problem in my community which is the food insecurity at public schools. I noticed that there were a lot of kids going hungry because they just relied on the schools to provide meals. Sometimes the only meal that they would have in the day was at school.

Voice Over - To secure school meals for vulnerable kids, school funding was vitally important. But Maycon found that schools were running out those funds before the end of academic year even though all the money they needed had been budgeted for at the beginning of that year. Something was going wrong - so Maycon looked into it.

Maycon - The main issue that I found was that the money from the government is not enough for many schools and it's not enough because the money comes from the federal government and then passes through the state government and the municipal government and then gets to the schools.

Voice Over - For one reason or another federal funding was not making its way down to kids who needed the money. Trying to solve the problem of deviated funds would take a coordinated effort over multiple levels of government. But Maycon saw an alternative - his answer lay in the power of local communities.

Maycon - I started to reflect on ways [that] I could tackle the issue and I noticed two main thing. First, Brazilians have a very strong sense of community so people are usually very prone to help each other and second, Brazilians have a lot of smartphones. Today like, statistics show that the number of smartphones in Brazil are double the amount of people so we Brazilians we are connected to the Internet.

Voice Over - By combining a strong sense of community with widespread internet connectivity Maycon came up with a solution that bridged the gap of funding shortfalls.

Maycon - I thought of creating a mobile app that could connect schools that need supplies with people and marketplaces that are willing to make donations.

Voice Over - A brilliant technical solution to a heartbreaking problem. Maycon being someone who could reflect on his own life, could reflect on this situation of funding school meals in his

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community and put the pieces together - kids who need food, a community willing to help, and technology ready to connect the two.

[Music transitions]

But it's important to note that technology in itself does not solve this problem. Only people can solve this problem. An app only facilitates that process. For this app to work it will still need people to download it. They will need to put the effort into learning how to use it and also forgive any bugs that might come up in early versions. The only way this will all work is if they all believe in it. They will need to understand why it's important. They will to imagine themselves in the same situation as those kids... and have it click... and that's Maycon's most important role here. He has to convince people on the street and in business meetings and at conferences that what he is doing is important and he has to convince those people why they need to help.

Maycon - I want you all to imagine something.

I want you to imagine that you just woke up...

and you're hungry...

[Music ends]

Voice Over - Maycon has proven he can do just that - he's proven that he's a real changemaker. Which meant he was a perfect candidate for the Youth Ag Summit.

Jump forward to the end of the Youth Ag Summit and Maycon had delivered a rousing pitch for his app to the entire delegate. He was one of 12 delegates chosen to present based on the power of his ideas and the qualities he displayed as a true AgVocate.

[SFX - sounds from the YAS closing party]

The Summit concluded with a big party where members of the final 12 presenters were given special awards... one of those awards was to be a YAS ambassador at another international conference and I, your humble narrator, was there to make the announcement.

YAS MC - And now for the delegate who will be sent to represent the Youth Ag Summit at the Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference... and the person that has been chosen is a perfect, perfect ambassador... because I'd like to call up... a delegate from Brazil... Maycon Santos!

[Music - 2019 YAS theme]

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Maycon - When you announced my name... it was like... I was thinking like... 'Yes Maycon you're on the right path'. You know that feeling when you, you get recognised and you know that you're on the right path to like, actually do something good? That's how I felt.

Voice Over - In the end the objectives of the Youth Ag Summit and Nuffield International are aligned. Both are about learning - learning about yourself and learning about your purpose in feeding a hungry planet. And when you find your purpose, you will find your path.

Jodie - Absolutely and my.. my kids...um... the primary school that my kids went to um, [the] school motto was 'Life long learning' and I think in Nuffield it's absolutely important. You should continue to learn - and not everything you learn will be of use to you but that doesn't mean you should learn it. It's a way to expand your mind, it's a way to expand the way that you think, the way you interact with people - you can't, you know... prejudice and racism and and and closed mindedness will only come from a lack of learning.

[Music ends]

Voice Over - On the 24th of January 2020 Nuffield International announced Bayer as its newest Global Strategic Partner recognising their shared vision and purpose as advocates for agriculture. Visit nuffieldinternational.org to find out how you too could become a Nuffield Scholar.

[Audio of Recorded Message begins "New Message, 10:38am"]

Hetti - Juu-huu! How are you going? It's Hetti here, 2015 Youth Ag Summit alumna from Estonia and recent attendee of the Nuffield CSC in Australia - an inspirational event!

I am currently bringing my own ag dream to life - establishing a cross-generational foster farm brining people together of all ages and living conditions. Feel free to join me on my ag-adventure if you're ready for some change.

[The AgVocate theme starts]

Hetti - You've been listening to The AgVocate, brought to you by the team behind Bayer's Youth Ag Summit. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Google Youth Ag Summit to visit our website. Subscribe to the newsletter and be part of the AgVocate community.

Special thanks go to Jodie and Maycon for making time in their very busy schedules to talk to us.

Please share this podcast far and wide and let us know what you think of this episode. We're also interested in suggestions for any future episodes. Perhaps we can even tell your story. Get in touch with us and let us know. Cheers!

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[The AgVocate theme ends]